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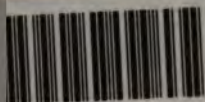
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HECTOR FIERAMOSCA,

OR

THE CHALLENGE OF BARLETTA:

AN HISTORICAL TALE.

BY

THE MARQUIS D'AZEGLIO.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN.

LONDON:

**LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN AND LONGMAN,
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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

THE original of the following Work was first published in Italy about three years ago. Its appearance excited considerable sensation in that country, from the circumstance of its author being a son-in-law of the justly celebrated Manzoni, which gave rise to an idea that the author of "*I Promessi Sposi*" might probably have had a hand in its composition. The Translator's attention was first drawn to the book from seeing its publication announced in those terms by the 'Foreign Quarterly Review.' It has since obtained popularity on the Continent and been translated into French.

As English readers generally may not be intimately acquainted with the state of Italy at the period alluded to in the following pages, and may not have access to the works of Guicciardini, Muratori, Giovio and others, who treat of it in detail, the Translator thinks it well

to mention that a brief historical account of the Challenge of Barletta and the subsequent combat (usually referred to in history as the Battle of Quadrato,) will be found in Mr. Roscoe's 'Life of Leo the Tenth', together with much information calculated to give interest to the perusal of a work which contains many historical facts and real characters interwoven with its fictions.

Concise sketches of the characters of Pope Alexander the Sixth and his son Cæsar Borgia, (Cardinal Valenza, and afterwards created Duke of Valentinois, in Dauphiny, by Louis the Twelfth of France,) of Lodovico Sforza (the Moor), the great Gonsalvo, and other personages figuring in the tale, are contained in Aikin's 'General Biography'; and a short but interesting Life of Vittoria Colonna in Mrs. Jameson's 'Loves of the Poets.'

March 25th, 1835.

HECTOR FIERAMOSCA,

OR

THE CHALLENGE OF BARLETTA.

CHAPTER I.

AT the close of a beautiful April day in the year 1503, the bell of the church of St. Dominick in Barletta* was tolling the last strokes of the *Ave Maria*. In the square close to the sea-shore, a sort of promenade for the quiet inhabitants, who in small towns in southern climates are accustomed at eventide to meet together and chat in the open air as a refreshment after the fatigues of the day, a number of Spanish and Italian soldiers, with this same intent, were dispersed in various groups, some sauntering along, others standing still, or seated, or leaning against the boats drawn up on the beach, which was almost covered with them; and, as is the case with the military of every age and nation, their behaviour was such as seemed to say "The world belongs to us." In fact, the townspeople, abandoning the best ground, held themselves apart; thus giving, as it

* A small town in the kingdom of Naples, situated in the Gulf of Manfredonia on the Adriatic.

were, tacit assent to the haughty assumption. Any one who, to form a good idea of the scene we are describing, should picture to himself a similar assemblage of our modern soldiers in their paltry uniform, would be far enough from having a correct notion of it. The army of Gonsalvo, especially the infantry, although the best equipped, and indeed the best soldiers, in all Christendom, were not acquainted, any more than the other armies of the sixteenth century, with that strict modern discipline, which has gone so far as to make one soldier exactly like another from his cap to his boots. Here, on the contrary, every man following the military profession, either on foot or in the cavalry, might clothe himself, arm himself, and adorn himself just as suited his fancy : and hence there arose in this assemblage a curious variety and beauty, both in the fashion of the dress, the colour, and the mode of wearing it, from which it was easy to distinguish the nation of each individual ;—the Spaniards for the most part grave, motionless, in a haughty attitude, and enveloped (or, as they would say, *embozados*) in their national cloak, from under which might be seen to peep the end of a long well-tempered Toledo blade ; the Italians loquacious and quick in gesture, wearing a *sajo* or doublet, with a cut-and-thrust dagger behind the loins.

At the sound of the bell the buzz of conversation ceased, and most of the hats disappearing, the heads remained uncovered ; for in those days even soldiers believed in God, and sometimes prayed to him. After a short pause the hats returned to their places, and the chattering began again ; but although the crowd taken together might at a first glance present a cer-

tain gay and lively aspect, one might easily perceive, by mixing with the different groups of talkers, that there existed some general reason for sadness and depression of mind, to the subject of which the minds and conversation of all were directed. Indeed the reason was real and powerful. Scarcity of food began to be felt by the soldiers, and also amongst the inhabitants of Barletta, in which the Great Captain, waiting for tardy assistance from Spain, had thrown an army too inferior in point of strength compared with the French, to allow him to risk everything on the chance of a day's battle.

Three sides of the square just mentioned were occupied by certain poor dwellings, the habitations of seamen and fishermen, by the church and by the tavern. The fourth was open towards the sea-shore, incumbered, as is usual in such places, with boats, nets and other fishing-tackle; and at the furthest point of the horizon might be seen, rising from the bosom of the waters, the dusky outline of Mount Gargano, on whose summit the last rays of the setting sun were swiftly vanishing.

A light barque was gently sailing in the space intervening: it tacked about from time to time, endeavouring to catch the breeze which blew in fickle gusts over the gulf, rippling here and there in long streaks the surface of the sea. The dusky twilight and the distance of the vessel prevented her flag being distinguished.

A Spaniard, who with many other soldiers stood near the shore, gazed intently at the vessel, straining his eyes, and twisting a tremendous pair of mustachios, rather grey than black.

"What are you looking at, that you seem so like a statue, and pay no attention when one speaks to you?"

This apostrophe of a Neapolitan soldier, who was out of humour at not receiving any answer to a previous question, produced no effect whatever upon the imperturbable Spaniard. At last, with a sigh that seemed to issue rather from a pair of bellows than a human breast, he exclaimed, "*Voto a Dios!* that our Lady of Gaeta, who sends fair wind and a prosperous voyage to so many that address her on the sea, would send that vessel to us who are praying to her on land, and who have nothing better to put between our teeth than gun-flints! Who knows if she has not on board corn and provisions for those *descomulgados* of Frenchmen, who are keeping us shut up in this cage that we may be starved to death—*Y mala Pasqua me de Dios, y sea la primera que viniere** if His Grace the Signor Gonsalvo Hernandez, when he has dined well and supped better, cares for us more than for the soles of his boots!"

"What can Gonsalvo do?" replied the Neapolitan pettishly, and pleased at the opportunity of contradiction; "ought he to turn himself into bread, to satisfy the cravings of a brute like you? When he has any bread to give, he will give it; and as to the contents of the ships that were wrecked on the sands of Manfredonia,—who devoured *them*? Gonsalvo, or you and your fellows?"

The Spaniard, by a slight change of countenance,

* A curious Spanish oath: literally, "God send me a bad Easter time, and may it be the first that comes!"

seemed disposed to rejoin, but was interrupted by another of the party, who, clapping him on the shoulder, with a shake of the head, and lowering the voice, as if to give more weight to his words, said: "Recollect, Nuño, that the blade of your halberd was within three inches of Gonsalvo's heart the day that there was such a strange disturbance in Taranto on account of arrears of pay: and if ever there was a time when it seemed likely that your black neck would come to a close acquaintance with the halter, it was then. Do you remember what a riot there was—enough to frighten a lion? Does that great castle tower move? (and he pointed to the principal tower of the citadel which raised its head far above the houses), just so Gonsalvo moved, and quite coolly—I fancy I see him now, with that skinny hand of his—turned aside the weapon, and said, '*Mira que sin querer no me hieras*'*."

At this point the dark countenance of the elder soldier grew darker; and to break off a conversation that pleased him but little, he cut the other short by saying, "What are Taranto, and the spear, and Gonsalvo, and all that to me?"

"What are they to you!" replied the other smiling: "if you would listen to Ruy Perez, and keep a free passage for your food to go down, when it pleases God to send us any, don't speak so loud that Gonsalvo may hear you; and recollect Taranto—"

"Half a word is enough, and one is too much," said the Italian; "and a man on his guard is half saved."

* "Take care lest you wound me without intending it."

Nuño gave a confused sort of reply, with which his mind seemed to have little to do, the advice received having plunged him involuntarily into deep thought. He cast his eye around anxiously, to see if he could detect any notion amongst the bystanders of denouncing his words. This search by good luck was, or seemed to him, encouraging.

The square in the mean time was almost deserted, and the hour of night sounded from the castle. This group accordingly imitated the others, which had already separated and gone away, and dispersed themselves amongst the narrow and dark streets of the town.

"Diego Garcia will return this evening," said Ruy Perez as he walked along; "his good lances must have met with something in the country worth giving chase to, and perhaps we may have a better dinner tomorrow than we have had a supper today." The ideas raised by such a cheering hope put an end to conversation, and each returned silently to his own quarters.

During the time occupied by this dialogue, the vessel, which at first appeared to be proceeding on its voyage, had by degrees run in considerably towards the land. A boat was let down from it, into which got two men, who rowed rapidly towards the beach; and hardly were they separated from the ship, when the latter crowded sail, made away, and was no more seen. The boat grounded in the darkest part of the square, and the two rowers jumped ashore. The foremost of these strangers seeing that no one was near, stopped to wait for his companion, who had remained behind, and was busy loading him-

self with a valise and other baggage, and having done that, drew along the boat to the extremity of a small pier that served for the debarkation of larger vessels, and then rejoined the first, who, both with regard to appearance and a certain air of arrogant superiority, seemed of higher rank, and who immediately said, as if in conclusion of the discourse which had taken place during their passage from the ship, "Michael, it is time now to be wary; you know who I am, and I need say no more." Michael well understood the force of these few syllables; he made a gesture to signify obedience, and they proceeded towards the tavern.

Before the principal door of this tavern six slender pillars of red brick supported a species of portico, under which were placed several tables for the use of customers. The landlord (whose name was Baccio da Rieti, but who, on account of certain suspicions, had a popular surname of *Veleno*, and so he was called by all,) had caused to be painted between two of the windows a great red sun, to which the artist, according to astronomical notions not at this day quite lost, had given eyes, nose and mouth, and abundance of gold-coloured rays, the shape of swallows' tails, and which in the day-time might be seen a mile off. The interior of the house consisted of two floors: a spacious room on the ground-floor served for kitchen and *salle à manger*; by a wooden ladder you ascended to a second, which the landlord occupied together with his family, and any other creature so unfortunate as to be obliged to pass the night at the inn. It was the common custom of

Italy in those times to sup at twenty-three* o'clock. At that hour, therefore, there were only at the tavern a few soldiers, or rather officers, seated near the door in the open air, part of the Italian company under command of Signor Prospero Colonna, who followed the fortunes of Spain; all bold young men, who were in the habit of frequenting the place with other brave men belonging to the army. The host, who knew his business, did not let them want either cards or wine; and being a sociable fellow, and full of jokes, had always something pleasant to say to each; and entertaining them in this manner, managed to pocket plenty of their money. Veleno stood right in the doorway, fanning himself with his cap, his apron tucked up to his side, and roars of laughter broke the silence of night.

The strangers arrived; and, not to appear such, they walked quietly along, often stopping and talking together. When they came opposite the doorway, and the brightness of the fire from within was reflected upon them, they appeared to be dressed very much in the same style as others that were there. The company took little notice of them as they entered, excepting one who was seated at some distance, and being in the dark had seen them better, and could not help giving them an "*Oh!*" expressive of the greatest astonishment, and exclaiming, "The

* An hour before sunset. It is only comparatively of late years that the Italians have adopted the division of the day now commonly in use. Formerly they counted twenty-four hours, beginning and ending with the setting of the sun. This custom is not yet entirely lost amongst the poor of remote villages in Italy.

Duke—" The mode in which this last word was pronounced showed plainly that it ought to be followed by some name; but a slight glance of the eye towards the personage that entered was quite sufficient to send that name back again down his throat. No one had attended to his expression of alarm; one companion only, who happened to be near him, said, " Boscherino, what duke are you dreaming about? and yet I have not seen you drinking today. Does it seem to you that this is a fit place for dukes?"

To Boscherino it did not appear strange to be disbelieved, or thought mad or drunk; but without entering into the question, he dexterously turned the conversation to the previous subject of discourse.

Behind the two that had entered the tavern followed Veleno, with his fat and slovenly figure, and olive-coloured face covered with beard, and having a malicious expression, savouring both of the block-head and the assassin.

" Your commands, gentlemen?"

The one whom we have known as Michael, stepping forward, replied, " We wish to have supper."

The host here twisted up his mouth, and answered in a pathetic tone, to which he made a strong endeavour to give an appearance of sincerity, " Supper! you mean to say a mouthful of the best we have, if indeed we have anything to put together. God knows what there is in the house in this strict siege! For a loaf was formerly worth a *cortonese**, and now it costs half a florin; and I pay as much to the baker. But, at any rate, for gentlemen like you we must do what we can: I will try my best." And

* A small coin no longer in use.

with this exordium, intended, according to the custom of landlords, to have the effect of making folks pay for everything at five times its value, he opened a cupboard, and taking thereout a stewing-pan, placed it over the fire; then blowing the latter with the aid of his apron, as a substitute for bellows, and at the same time puffing up the ashes nearly as high as the ceiling, a piece of kid was soon cooked, which, as the host said, "was the only meat at that hour in Barletta, and ought to have been the supper of a corporal, who was expected to come for it every minute; but gentlemen like them must not be sent to bed with empty stomachs."

However this might be, the food was acceptable. It was brought to table in earthenware vessels, together with a capacious mug of the same material. There was also half a cheese, made of ewe's milk, and as hard as a stone, bearing marks of having been well hacked by the knives of the preceding customers who had made their attacks on it.

The table at which the strangers were sitting was at the bottom of the *hall*, (if that name, indeed, ought to be given to such a smoky den). At the opposite end a large chimney, with a fire-place capable of containing a dozen people, had on its two sides three or four stoves: before it was the cook's table; and from the middle of this, in the shape of a capital T, a large straight table extended the whole length of the place, almost as far as the wall right opposite, where the two were at supper.

The host, when he had prepared everything for the supper of his two guests, whistling as he was wont to do, returned to the doorway at the precise time

that there arrived, full gallop on a mule, a man who, leaping off without touching the stirrup, cried out, "Come, lads, cheer up and take courage, for there's good news for us! And you, Veleno, make the most of yourself, for you'll have enough to do for all of us. Diego Garcia has returned, and dismounted at his house, and will be here presently to sup. There will be twenty or five-and-twenty good swordsmen, and he alone as good as four; you had better, therefore, be in readiness, and quick. Well, what are you about? Are you alive or dead? Bestir yourself."

The landlord was standing all this time with his mouth open. The young soldiers had risen up, and surrounded the messenger, teasing him to tell them how the expedition had succeeded.

"Do you want to kill me?" said he, thrusting them back and withdrawing from the midst of them; "you shall know nothing. Pray are you to speak, or am I?"

"Speak up, speak up!" cried all of them at once. "What news?"

"The news is, that we have returned half-dead with fatigue; that we have been fourteen hours on horseback without tasting a drop of water—I say, Veleno, bring me a measure of wine, enough for three; my throat is as dry as a piece of touchwood—but forty head of fat cattle and thirty-five score of smaller sort are now standing in Barletta, and three men-at-arms prisoners, who, God willing, must spit out as many ducats of gold as we are baptized Christians, if they are inclined to see the doors of their own homes again. And I can tell you it was no

joke dismounting them and getting their swords—the wine! are you going to bring it, before I drop down dead?—for they twirled them round with both hands like lightning. There was one especially, on the ground, with his wounded horse lying on him, and we all cried out to him, ‘Surrender, or no quarter!’ Well, he went on thrusting with his great long sword, and if it had not been broken with a blow he directed at Inigo’s horse, but which struck the iron saddle-bow instead, we must either have finished him with our lances or he would have been rescued. At last he gave up the remaining half of his sword to Diego Garcia.”

Here Veleno made his appearance with the wine, and poured out a bumper for the narrator, who exclaimed, “It’s a blessed thing that you have come at last!”

“And what is the name of this devil?” inquired Boscherino.

“I don’t exactly know: they say he is a great French baron: the name is something like La Crotte—La—Motte, now I recollect—yes, La Motte—a bit of a brute, you may see, that makes some noise in the world. But enough: the affair came off well, and, please God, we’ll feast right merrily on the occasion.” Then looking round the interior of the tavern, and addressing the landlord, “What are you doing, you lazy rascal,” said he, “that you have put nothing to the fire yet? Do you want me to measure the breadth of your shoulders with this whip?”

And hereupon he entered, in order to execute his threat, but stopped short on perceiving that a capacious saucepan had already been placed on a bundle

of firewood, through which the flames were spreading and crackling; whilst the host, his face red and covered with perspiration, quite forgetting all about famine and siege, and well knowing that Paredes and his comrades were not to be trifled with, ran about the house giving orders for all sorts of things. In a twinkling he found what suited his purpose; and cutting up a lamb, put part of it to boil, and through the remainder he ran a couple of long spits, which he set a-going on the hooks before the fire. The whole now put on a promising appearance.

"Ah, this looks well!" said the orderer of the supper; "and well for you, Veleno. If those gentry had arrived, and everything had not been ready, you would have ascertained the weight of Diego Garcia's fist."

"But, Ramazzotto, won't you come with them?" said one of the corporals.

"How can I come? The company is still on horseback; I have to send them to their quarters, and keep an eye on the booty which is in the square of the castle. Some hands are fond of night-work, you know, and amongst the troops there are some who understand that sort of business. Fieramosca, Brancaleone, and all our men, are there on the alert; and indeed it is committed to us to see that nothing scandalous happens. The Spaniards may take their turn another time; and let any one that touches beware!"

"If that is the case," replied Boscherino, "we'll accompany and assist you. Come along, comrades; this good fellow has gone through more fatigue* than we have, and we ought to help him."

* Idiom in the Italian, *has more miles in his body*.

Upon this they all left the tavern, and, talking over the events of the day, proceeded towards the place where Ramazzotto's company was waiting for him. Ramazzotto, leading his beast by the bridle, walked along in the midst of them, telling anecdotes and answering questions; and Boscherino was following, all intent upon what the other had to say, when he felt something pulling at his cloak, and turning round, saw a man in the shade whom he recognised as one of the two whom he had left at supper in the tavern.

"Boscherino," said the man in an under tone, stopping him, whilst the rest proceeded on their way, "the Duke wishes to speak to you. Don't be frightened, he won't do you any harm in the world. However, be on your guard, and be prudent. Let us go."

Poor Boscherino was in a fever on hearing these words, and said in a voice scarcely audible, "Is it you, Don Michael?"

"Yes, 't is I: be silent, and conduct yourself like a brave fellow as you are."

Boscherino had been captain of a troop under Signor G. P. Baglioni and other Italian gentlemen, and in the wars of that time had always behaved valiantly, and no man thought less than he of encountering dangers; so that when Signor Prospero Colonna formed a company of five hundred infantry and a hundred harquebusiers, Boscherino had entered with respectable pay, and was thought much of. But, however firm his courage, when he heard Don Michael's words, and was obliged to go back, knowing the personage before whom, within a few mo-

ments, he should have to stand, he could not prevent his very knees trembling; and, if such a choice had been offered him, he would much rather have thrown himself against a dozen swords than have gone where he was going. Thinking over what had passed previously, he made a good guess at the truth, and said to himself, "It is but too certain that he must have heard me when I said '*The Duke!*' The devil must have moved my tongue—and yet he was a long way from me, and I don't think I spoke very loud. But where would not that spirit of hell reach?—and now what cursed intentions have brought him here?"

Whilst these thoughts were passing through his mind, they had arrived at the tavern. The only people there belonged to the house, and were in the kitchen. The Duke had been shown up into his sleeping-room, which was over the large supper-room, and the planks of the floor were so badly joined that one could hear and see everything going on below.

A slight suspicion had passed through the landlord's brain that the strangers were not exactly what they appeared to be; but, beleaguered by the enemy only on the land side, many people arrived there of all ranks by sea; nor did our host make it a matter of importance, when he now and then saw a face differing from those he was accustomed to.

Don Michael and Boscherino having mounted the ladder, arrived in the chamber where the Duke was. A bed, covered with a grey counterpane, a small table, and a few wooden stools, were the only furniture in the room. The lamp, which had been dying away, was extinguished by the current of air caused

by the opening of the door ; and Boscherino, whilst Don Michael went for another light, found himself alone with the Duke in the dark. He stood still where he was, shrinking back against the wall, not daring to speak, and hardly to breathe, and was astonished to find himself such a coward,—he that had never feared any person in the world. But the certain knowledge of being in the presence of that wonderful and terrible man ; the feeling himself so near that, from the silence in which both remained, he could hear the other's frequent respiration ; all this, in spite of himself, made him shudder, and almost wish that he was not alive. Don Michael returned with a light, and the Duke was seen sitting on the side of the bed. His appearance was that of a man who has never known what it is to have repose of mind or body. Well knit and bony of limb, and of stature rather taller than ordinary, there was still in every motion a certain indescribable tremulousness. He wore a dark-coloured cloak with diced* sleeves ; there was a small dagger in his girdle, and on the table lay his sword and hat, the latter ornamented with a single black plume. He had gloves on, and his legs were protected by a pair of large travelling boots. Towards the two new comers he displayed a pallid face and furrowed cheeks, spread over with purple blotches ; his whiskers and beard were reddish and rather long, the beard descending in two rolls down to his chest. As for the expression of his eye, it would be impossible to find anything in this world resembling it : at his pleasure now darting

* Slashed and plaited or interlaced.

and glittering like that of a viper, now soft and gentle as an infant's, now terrible as the bloodshot orb of the hyena.

He looked at Boscherino, who had contrived to advance half-way and then stood stock still as if waiting for sentence of death, and he looked at him in a manner to take away all fear; but Boscherino knew his man, and was not at all re-assured. "You have recognised me, Boscherino," said the Duke, "and I am glad of it; I have always considered you a man of fidelity and trustworthy; and if you had not come in my way, I should have sought you out: I knew very well that you were here. Don't mention that you have seen me here to a single person: you know that I am able to reward you for your services, and that you would gain little by displeasing me."

The captain was but too well aware of the truth of this, and accordingly answered, "Your Excellency can make use of me as it pleases you, and I shall always be, as I have been, your faithful servant: nor do I think that my past life will furnish matter of doubt on that point. I only entreat that Your Excellency will do me the honour of allowing me to say two words with freedom."

The Duke having nodded assent, he continued. "You possess my fidelity, most noble lord, nor will it ever diminish: but some one else may have seen you. If the circumstance should be divulged, after my having been here, I might be blamed for it, without being in the slightest degree guilty; so that I hardly see how I can come out of the affair with honour."

"Go," replied the Duke; "be willing and ho-

nest, and I will not make charges against you that you don't deserve. It happens to be necessary that I should remain concealed a few hours; when they are over, any one may know and say what they like; but let it not pass your lips if you value my favour."

Boscherino made no answer to these words, except by a profoundly respectful inclination of the head, which expressed that he was ready to obey, and had no other fear than that of not being thought obedient enough. He took his leave, and walking backwards with many low bows, left the chamber; and it appeared to him a thousand years before he got into the street. After a few moments Don Michael came out also, and having found out the room intended for him, shut himself in; and the upper floor of the tavern, during the remainder of the night, was as quiet as if it had been unoccupied.

CHAPTER II.

THE party for whom the supper had been dressed arrived at Veleno's house about the second hour of night, and soon filled the large room on the ground-floor, where it was prepared. The host, on this important occasion, had covered the table with a linen tablecloth, on which, besides the dishes and plates of pewter and brass, which shone brighter than usual from the especial scouring they had undergone, there were here and there large vine-leaves laid under the cups and glasses, on which glittered innu-

merable drops of water lighted up by the rays from the lamps, giving evidence that they had just been freshly rinsed out for service. Diego Garcia di Paredes entered first, and after him the French barons who had been taken prisoners, Jacques de Guignes, Giraut de Forses, and La Motte. The Spaniard, a man of the greatest boldness and strength in the whole army, and perhaps in all Europe, seemed precisely formed by nature for the profession of arms, in which the greater the robustness and muscular power, the greater was the success. In height he towered above his companions; and constant exercise, acting upon a frame like his, had taken away all fat from his limbs, but given such thickness to every muscle, that in his chest, shoulders, and other parts, he resembled a colossus of ancient sculpture, possessing an athletic and at the same time a finely proportioned form. His neck, large as that of a bull, supported a rather small curly head, with hair growing low down upon the poll; his countenance was bold and manly, though without any shade of arrogance. The appearance of Diego Garcia was not without a certain grace, and in the expression of his face might be read simplicity, loyalty, and honour. He had already laid aside his armour, and retained the dress of leather tight to the skin, which at every motion allowed the rise and play of the muscles to be seen as plainly as if they had been uncovered: a short cloak, thrown over one shoulder in his own Spanish fashion, completed his simple costume.

"My lords," said he, ushering in his prisoners with knightly courtesy, "we Spaniards have a say-

ing, *Duelos con pan son menos**. Fortune has treated you ill today; perhaps tomorrow we shall come in for our share of her displeasure. In the mean time we may as well be friends: let us go to supper; for, *por Dios santo!* I believe on that point we shall all agree. More than one lance has been shivered to-day, and that is sufficient: no one will be able to reprove us for letting our arms grow rusty. Make yourselves comfortable, and tomorrow we will talk about ransom, when you shall see that Diego Garcia knows how to treat cavaliers like yourselves."

The expression of La Motte, on hearing these words, was that of a man who, being much vexed, does not wish to appear so. A valiant and good soldier, and particularly fierce with arms in his hands, and with an appearance that by no means belied his real character, he was, however, one of the proudest men in the world, and could not tolerate even receiving courtesy from a man who had made him prisoner. At the same time knowing how uncourteous it would have been to show his bitter feelings, he answered as cheerfully as he could, "Your hand may be about as light in imposing a ransom as it is in inflicting a sword-cut; but His Most Christian Majesty will pay for us out of his purse, if he wishes to have us back again; if not, I will be your companion for the rest of my days."

"Inigo," said Paredes, turning to a handsome youth about five-and-twenty, who whilst waiting for supper had already laid hands on some bread, "if

* "Food makes afflictions more endurable."

we would talk of sword-cuts, we should ask your horse how he likes the taste of this baron's thrusts." Then addressing himself to La Motte: "I perceive, rather tardily perhaps, that you are not armed. Here is my sword:" (and detachng it from his person, he placed it at the side of his prisoner;) "it would be a pity for a hand like yours to have no hilt to rest upon. You will hold Barletta as your prison until exchange or ransom. Your *parole*, sir knight?"

La Motte held out his hand to Paredes, who took it, and added, "You will make the same compact with your companions, is it not so?" This was addressed to Correa and Azevedo, two men-at-arms who made prisoners of La Motte's comrades. They answered that they were content to do so; and both, with like courtesy, having ungirded their swords, girded the French barons with them.

"On the table, gentlemen!" bawled Veleno, placing in the midst of the same table a capacious tureen, in which lay about half of a lamb, garnished with onions and other vegetables, and at the ends two large dishes full of salad. The appearance of the eatables was not less powerful than the voice of the host in claiming for them the attention of the half-famished company. They all eagerly put back and drew in the benches, and in a moment were seated and at work. For some minutes not a word was heard, and the only noise arose from the clattering and jingling of plates, knives, spoons, and glasses.

Diego Garcia had taken the head of the table, and placed La Motte and De Guignes on either side of him. Carving with his great dagger, he had in a very short time cut up the animal, and helped all the

guests. His hard stomach, well served by two rows of teeth of incomparable strength and whiteness, was, he found, after a few minutes, quieted, if not satisfied. Not a single bone remained on his plate, for no mastiff could rival him in crumbling them to powder. His allowance disposed of, he filled his neighbours' glasses and his own. After eating and drinking a little so as to quiet the first fury of appetite, conversation succeeded, mixed up with interrogations, replies and repartees, which turned chiefly on warlike subjects, or on horses, on blows given or attempted, and on the various incidents of that day in particular. At the lower part of the table, where were seated twenty or five-and-twenty Spaniards, leaving by courtesy to their commander and the French prisoners what they call the *cabecera*, or top of the table, one might perceive by their words and gestures that brotherly warm-heartedness which is usually produced by persons being daily companions in extreme dangers, in which the value of prompt and ready mutual assistance is well known.

The rugged and sunburnt visages of these men-at-arms, which by exertion, recent fatigue and hot victuals, had become red and inflamed, produced in the lamp-light reflected from above an effect of light and shade worthy of the pencil of Gherardo delle Notti.

As the end of the meal approached, the conversation, as usual, had become more general, and the laughter and noise had increased amongst such as had borne away honour and profit from that day's skirmish. The brow of Inigo was the only one which had not yet become serene: he sat with his elbows

resting on the table, and gazed around, joining very little, if at all, in the chatting of his comrades.

"Inigo," said Azevedo, who perhaps had emptied a glass more than he was accustomed to, and being a pleasant fellow hardly relished seeing one of the party so perseveringly melancholy; "Inigo, one would say that you were in love, if indeed the ladies of Barletta merited the glances of a handsome youth like you. But here, thank God, we are pretty safe. I hope you have not left your heart in Spain or at Naples?"

"I am not thinking of the ladies, Azevedo," replied the young man, "but I am thinking of my good steed, which that baron has wellnigh slaughtered, persisting in using his hands like a madman, when he saw well enough that he could not get away from us. Poor Castaño! his shoulder is done for, I fear; and I don't believe I shall ever have another under me like him. Do you recollect what this devil here did at Taranto? and when we were fording that river—I forget the name—the place where Quinoñes was killed—where the water was rather deeper than we expected—who arrived first on the opposite bank?—and now, after so many trials and so many dangers, for him to be finished by the hand of this enemy of God!"

"Don't talk so loud," said Correa; "what has been done has been done in a soldierly manner, and the prisoners ought not to be blamed for it, nor ought they to hear such speeches as these."

"And I swear," continued Inigo, "that I should gladly be lying wounded on the ground, if I could see my poor Castaño safe and well. I could pardon

the Frenchman if he had broken the sword upon my head, instead of using it against my horse. One aims at men,—at least any one that knows how to hold a sword in his hand does,—and not here and there at random, like mad. *Maladetto!* he seemed as if he were driving away flies."

"You are right, by Jove!" exclaimed Segredo, an old soldier with whisker and beard, that showed he had seen more than one battle; "when I was young I thought as you do. Look at my forehead," (and tapping it lightly with a hand rendered horny by constant use of a gauntlet, he showed them a large scar extending horizontally across his brow); "I received this from *El Rey Chico*, owing to my love for a horse, the finest bay in our camp. Ah, he *was* a horse! When we came to close quarters with men-at-arms, it was enough to check the bridle slightly and give him a touch of the spur, and what do you think! up went his fore-legs, and he gave such a flying leap forward, that I can tell you I had to cling pretty fast, if I did not wish to be flung over his ears; and when we came down, such effect was given to the weight of my sword that it seemed like a thunderbolt; and in this way I sent more than one Moor to sup with Satan. And the *siesta*—I used to sleep between his legs, poor, dear Zamoreno! and he did n't even dare to defend himself from the flies, for fear of disturbing me. At the siege of Carthage, where some of you may have been, and where our great commander began to make himself known—and, I can tell you, we had better fighting then than we have now, under the eyes of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella (who was a beauty) and

of the whole court, and were well paid, and we and our horses entertained as if we were in a king's palace, —But to go on about my horse. In a sally, in which the *Rey Chico* at the head of his soldiers fought like a lion, (and he was a man who, when he did come near you, had an arm that never failed to leave a mark where it aimed,) the poor animal had his neck run through by a Moorish lance, and, for the first time in his life, fell on his knees. I flung myself on the ground, and saw that he was past cure. Yet I hoped to be able to lead him back to the camp, for I would not have deserted him for the whole world. He followed me, although he had hardly strength left to stand; and I am not ashamed to say that scalding tears ran fast down through the gorget of my helmet, and streamed over my neck—I who had never known what it was to weep! Just then, pursued by a number of men-at-arms, a crowd of Moors came flying back; and their king, compelled to retreat, was roaring with rage like a bull. Alone and on foot, I was overtaken by them, and gave myself up for lost. I kept off more than one of them with my weapon, but received such a sword-cut from the hand of the king, that it went right through my helmet, and left me senseless for a time. When I came to myself, and was able to stand, I found my poor Zamoreno stretched lifeless by my side!"

The anecdotes of Segredo's steed had been listened to with emotion by the whole table, and the old soldier at the conclusion of his story could not avoid showing, on a face furrowed by age and troubles, that the memory of his former companion was

still vividly impressed on his heart. Here, however, he was rather ashamed of its being perceived, and he filled a bumper of wine to draw off the attention of those who were looking at him.

Jacques de Guignes, who, not less than his fellow-prisoners, had found his spirits rising in a similar ratio to the increasing satisfaction of his stomach, having heard the tale about Zamoreno, commenced: "*Chez nous*, Sir Knight, this would not in all probability have taken place, although it is but too true that *les bonnes coutumes de chevalerie* are vanishing daily. For a man-at-arms would consider it dishonourable, against equal arms and numbers, to let his sword fall on the horse of his enemy. But from the Moors, as we all know, it is useless to expect this courtesy."

"And yet," said Inigo, replying to a speech that was not addressed to him, "it might be proved that it is not the custom of the Moors alone to slaughter horses. The plains under Benevento know that well, and so did poor Manfredi. And Charles of Anjou, who gave the orders in the matter, was about as much a Moor as you or I."

This was a home thrust, and the Frenchman writhed in his seat.

"That has been talked of," said he, "and it may be true, but Charles of Anjou was fighting for a kingdom, and was then engaged against an excommunicated enemy of the church—"

"And this kingdom, did it not belong to another?" interrupted Inigo with a sneer.

"I think you should know," remarked La Motte, "that the kingdom of Naples is a feud under His

Holiness the Pope, and that Charles had the investiture ; and then we must allow some value to the right of a good sword."

"And then, and then—let us tell the thing in the right way," continued Inigo. "Manfredi's bearded Germans and the thousand Italian cavaliers that were led by count Giordano to fight against the French, had shown themselves such true men from the commencement of the battle, that Charles of Anjou, wishing to make himself king of Naples, thought it advisable to recur to this expedient in spite of the *bonnes coutumes de chevalerie* in vogue in those times."

"I will grant," answered La Motte, "if you wish it, that the Austrians are worth something when well armed, and might perhaps have made head for a short time, against the French *gens d'armes*, at the battle of Benevento ; but as to your thousand Italians, truly, if two centuries ago they were anything like what they are now, the French need not have wasted their time in maiming their poor horses in order to have put *them* to rout. During the five years that we have been scouring Italy, I have learnt to know them ; I followed king Charles in the company of the brave Louis d'Ars, and I assure you that the cunning and frauds of the Italians have given us more to do than their swords. The only warfare they are acquainted with, is the only one that French honour is ignorant of."

These high-sounding words were by no means pleasing to the hearers in general, and not at all so to Inigo, who possessed an intellect above mediocrity.

He was on friendly terms with several Italians fighting under the banners of Spain, and knew how

things had gone on the descent of Charles into Italy. He knew, for instance, that in spite of French honour the French had broken the treaty with the Florentines, and had caused Pisa to rebel against them: nor had the fortresses, which the imprudence of Pietro de' Medici had placed in their power, been restored at the time appointed, according to a pledge given. All this ran through Inigo's mind, and La Motte's speech vexed him exceedingly, for he could not bear that the poor Italians, after having been betrayed and ill treated by the French, should by these same people be spoken of as traitors, and covered with abuse. He was on the point, therefore, of speaking his mind on the subject, when the other, perceiving that his words had not been favourably received, added, " You have but lately come from Spain, gentlemen, and don't yet know what *canaille* these Italians are: you have had nothing to do with duke Lodovico, or with the Pope, or with Valentinois*, who first received us with open arms, and afterwards endeavoured to plant daggers in our backs. But they found out at Fornovo what a handful of brave men can do against a cloud of traitors; and *the Moor*† was the first to be caught in his own nets. The wretch! if he had committed no other crime than that of murdering his own nephew, would not this have sufficed to make him the most infamous of assassins?"

* Cæsar Borgia, a son of Pope Alexander VI., and created by him Cardinal of Valenza: another of his titles was that of Duke of Valentinois, conferred on him by the king of France.

† Lodovico Sforza, one of the dukes of Milan, who obtained the above distinctive appellation, probably from his peculiar complexion and features.

"But," said Correa, "his nephew was in a sickly state and of weak mind, and it is said died naturally."

"Naturally, like all those who have poison given them. De Forses and De Guignes know it, for they were quartered with me in the castle of Pavia. The king went to visit the wretched family of Galeazzo, (and all this I have from the mouth of Philip de Comines, to whom it was told by the king himself); *the Moor* conducted him through some dark passages into two low and damp chambers looking out on the moat of the castle. There they found the duke of Milan*, with his wife Isabella and their children. Isabella threw herself at the king's feet, with entreaties on behalf of her father, and would have prayed for herself and her husband, but that the villain, *the Moor* was present. Poor Galeazzo, pale and wasted, spoke but little, apparently stunned by the weight of his misfortunes: at that moment he had in his veins the poison that put an end to his existence.—And Cæsar Borgia, for another instance: where can you find a similar couple? We have seen several doings of his, that would not be credited were we to relate them. But many of his crimes are already sufficiently public: all the world knows that he assassinated his brother, to gain possession of his honours and property; all the world knows what he has done to become master of Romagna; all the world knows that he has killed his cousin, and poisoned cardinals, bishops, and as many others as have offended him."

Then turning to his French comrades, with an ex-

* Galeazzo Sforza. *The Moor* usurped the Duchy on, or rather before, duke Galeazzo's death.

pression of countenance denoting the remembrance of a circumstance well known and worthy of compassionate feeling, he continued: "And poor Ginevra di Monreale! the most lovely, the most virtuous, the most amiable lady I have ever been acquainted with! my friends here will recollect having seen her during our stay at Rome in 1492. To her misfortune she became known to the duke of Valentinois, at that time a cardinal; she was then the wife of an officer in our army, whom she had married entirely from obedience to her father. She was seized with a malady that no one was acquainted with; every remedy was tried, without effect—she died. But by a singular accident I became acquainted with a most infernal secret that few have heard: her disease was no other than poison administered to her by the duke, in order to punish her inflexible virtue. Unfortunate lady! are not these things fit to call down thunder from heaven?"

Here the Frenchman ceased, and, immersed in thought, seemed endeavouring to recall some circumstance to his mind, the remembrance of which had been dimmed by time. "But yes, I can't be mistaken; this very day, amongst your men-at-arms, on coming into Barletta, I saw one, whose name I certainly don't recollect, but whom I well remember meeting often in Rome at that time, and he has a face and figure not easily to be forgotten: every one said he was a secret lover of Ginevra, he disappeared after her death, and no one knew anything more about him—*mais oui, je suis sûr que c'est le même*," said he, turning to his companions: "a mile from the town, as he halted at the fountain, waiting for the foot soldiers—that pale youth, with the auburn hair—and *I don't think I ever saw the face of a man more hand-*

some or more melancholy than his. Yes, yes, it is he, I am certain ! but don't ask me his name."

The Spaniards looked at each other, wondering who it could be that he referred to.

"Was he an Italian?" asked one.

"Yes, an Italian. It is true he did not open his mouth; but his companion, who dismounted and handed him a draught of water, spoke to him in Italian."

"And his armour?"

"I think he had a smooth cuirass, with a coat-of-mail, and, if I mistake not, a feather and a blue scarf—"

Inigo was the first to cry out "Hector Fieramosca!"

"Fieramosca, exactly," answered La Motte; "now I recollect, Fieramosca. Well, this Fieramosca was in love with Ginevra, (at least so it was said,) and, not seeing him appear after her death, many believed that he had been murdered too."

The Spaniards here began to laugh, remarking to one another that there was no longer occasion to be astonished at the melancholy and solitary life he led, so different from other young men of his age and rank. All agreed, however, in praising his good-nature, bravery, and courtesy; from which it might be perceived how much he was beloved and esteemed by the army. And Inigo more than the rest, being his friend, and, unlike men of vulgar mind, admiring without jealousy the rare endowments of the Italian warrior, and finding that the more he knew of him the more he loved him, began praising him with all the ardour of friendship that the heart of a Spaniard can contain: "His face may please you,—and whom

does it not please?—but what is beauty of face in a man? If you knew the soul of that youth! the nobleness, the generosity of his heart! what he has dared with arms in his hand, with that bold valour which in most men is united with a certain species of intoxication, but in him, on the contrary, is always accompanied by consummate prudence! In the course of my life I have known some brave young men, both at the court of Spain and in France; but I tell you as a man of honour, that such an one, taken altogether, as that Italian,—for, by Jove, he is everything,—I have never met with, nor do I expect to meet with again."

The favour which Fieramosca enjoyed in the army was such, that each of the party wished to put in his word, and all showed concern for his misfortune; nor was old Segredo more hardened than the others, and he said, "Although I have never had any time to waste with the ladies, and could never conceive how a breast covered with armour could suffer torment on their account, nevertheless, seeing that brave youth always sad, with such a downcast countenance, inspires me with a feeling that I don't well understand: *Por Dios santo!* I would give my best horse (provided it were not Pardo) to see him for once enjoy a hearty burst of laughter."

"I said it was a love complaint!" exclaimed Azevedo: "when one sees a young man pale and silent, and fond of solitude, there is no mistaking,—it must be a petticoat affair. 'T is true," said he, smiling, "that at times when luck makes your sequins go the wrong way, it is not agreeable, and you may perhaps turn sufficiently pale and melancholy for ten

petticoats. But no matter; that's another thing: and then it does not last so long. And as for Fieramosca, he is in no danger of that, for I've never seen him with cards in his hands.—Now I understand the motive of his night voyages. You know that my windows look towards the pier: more than once have I seen him late in the evening get into a boat, alone, and row away behind the castle. 'A prosperous voyage!' have I said to myself, getting into bed; 'every one has his own tastes;' and I guessed he was on some love expedition, but never dreamed that he went on the sea to weep for one who is in the other world. It seems impossible—a soldier like him to allow himself to be overcome by such folly!"

"It shows," replied Inigo with some warmth, "that a kind and affectionate heart can exist in the bosom of a man who is bold enough in the face of an enemy; and, thank God! on this point justice must be done to Fieramosca, as well as the other Italians that the brothers Colonna have under their standard: not a man who wears a sword or bears a lance can boast of wielding his weapon more worthily, or of being braver than they."

To this eulogium, pronounced with all the heat of a bold spirit and frank and sincere disposition, the Spaniards immediately, by gestures and words, gave an assent which they could not withhold, being daily witnesses of the valour of the Italian men-at-arms. But the three prisoners, excited by the conversation and the wine, and La Motte in particular, annoyed at Inigo, who had been saying cutting things to him during the supper, could not refrain from indulging his proud spirit by expressing the opinion that all were as

nothing compared with himself and his countrymen. He therefore answered the Spaniard's speech with a smile and look of compassion that made the young man feel vexation to his very hairs' end; which was increased by half when La Motte went on to say, "As to that, sir knight, neither I nor my comrades are of your opinion. We have been in arms for some years in Italy, and, as I have already remarked, we have oftener seen stiletos and poison used there than lances and swords: and I beg you to believe it. A French *gendarme* (here he looked very big) would be ashamed to have as grooms in his stable men that were not more valiant than these cowards of Italians: so you may judge whether it is proper to compare them with *us*."

"Hear me, sir knight, and open your ears wide," answered Inigo, unable any longer to contain his rage at hearing the other bestow such insulting language on his friends, and at the same time giving vent to his feelings against the man who had maimed his poor steed, "if any *one* of our Italians were here, and more particularly Fieramosca, and if you were at liberty instead of being Diego Garcia's prisoner, you would find to your cost that a French soldier would have enough for both hands to do in defending his skin against an Italian: but since you are a prisoner, and we are all Spaniards here, I, who am a friend to Fieramosca and the Italians, tell you, in their name, that you or any one who shall say that when armed they are afraid of a living soul, whoever he may be, or that they are, as you say, cowards and traitors, lies in his throat; and they are ready to prove it on equal terms against all the world, on foot or on

horseback, in full armour or with swords alone, where and whenever it may suit you."

La Motte and his comrades, who at the commencement of this speech regarded the speaker in haughty attitudes, with countenances changing by degrees as it went on, until they appeared expressive of mingled passion and surprise, stood waiting for its conclusion. As it usually happens in an assemblage of persons, when in the midst of noise and laughter a voice is heard to rise above the rest, threatening violence and blood, that sudden silence ensues, and every one is anxious to ascertain the cause; so the buzz of conversation having now entirely ceased, each Spaniard stood waiting with intense interest to see what might ensue from this quarrel.

"We are prisoners," replied La Motte with a mixture of pride and modesty, "and cannot, therefore, accept challenges; but with the approbation of the men-at-arms who hold our swords, and who, be it well understood, shall have just ransom for us,—in my own name, in the name of my companions here, and of the whole *gendarmerie* of France, I answer, and repeat what I have said once already, and will always say, that the Italians are good for nothing save intrigue and treachery, that they have no military talent, and that they are the most pitiful soldiers that ever put foot in stirrup or wore armour: and he that says I have lied, lies himself; and I will maintain my word against him with my arms." Then searching in his bosom he drew therefrom a cross of gold, and after kissing it laid it on the table. "And may I have no hope in this symbol of our salvation at my dying hour,—may I be held a faithless knight, and

apartments with the men-at-arms who had captured them. We think we may venture to assert that in spite of the bravados in which they made so light of the Italians, a secret feeling, and perhaps experience, told them that if they would perform their pledge with honour, there would be more need of actions than words. Inigo himself, although he felt perfectly confident in the bravery of his friends, and was sure that in military glory they might be pitted against the world, yet reflecting that their adversaries were warriors of high rank, and considered the best swordsmen in the French army, could not help musing upon what might be the issue of the affair. In fact La Motte and his comrades were incomparable soldiers: their valiant feats of arms were known to all the soldiers of that age; and among the French troops were several others by no means inferior to them either in courage or skill; the celebrated Bayard, for instance, was alone sufficient to give great weight to the balance.

Spite of these reflections the proud Spaniard did not repent an instant of having taken the part of the Italians, and thought it would have been most mean of him to have tolerated the abuse which the insolent prisoner had directed against those who were his friends, and absent. "And how can he be vanquished," said he to himself, "who fights for the honour of his country?" Having in this manner refreshed his mind, he determined to have a conference the next morning with Fieramosca on the business, and to use all possible endeavours to ensure success and honour to the cause which he had undertaken to patronize: and full of these noble thoughts he re-

mained, without being able to sleep much, waiting for the hour when he might put his hands to the enterprise.

CHAPTER III.

THE citadel of Barletta, then occupied by Gonsalvo and certain other chief commanders of his army, was situated between the principal square of the town and the sea. In the surrounding buildings were quartered here and there the Spanish and Italian officers with their suite; and amongst them, in one of the better habitations, the brothers Prospero and Fabrizio Colonna had taken up their abode, with a sumptuous train of esquires, servants and horses, suitable to so noble a house. Hector Fieramosca was particularly valued and beloved by them for his innumerable merits: they treated him as their own child, and had accommodated him with a small house near the sea and adjoining their own apartments, which comfortably contained him and his servants, horses and baggage. The room on the highest floor of the house, where he was accustomed to sleep, had an easterly aspect*.

It was the morning after the supper; the first light of dawn appearing in the horizon hardly sufficed to render the sea's dark outline distinguishable from the sky, when young Fieramosca leaving his couch,

* Looked towards the sea.

where he seldom enjoyed any tranquil sleep, walked out upon a terrace, at the foot of which the waves were plashing gently, agitated by the fresh morning breeze.

Poor inhabitants of the North! ye know not the value of this hour under a lovely southern sky, on the sea-shore, and whilst Nature is immersed in silent sleep,—a silence interrupted only by the drowsy murmuring of the waters, which, like human thoughts, have never known repose since their first creation, nor will as long as they continue to exist! He who has never found himself in solitude at this hour, he who has never felt his face fanned by the last flapping of the night-bat's wings, before the sun arrives to warm the beautiful regions of this kingdom, knows not how far the divine beauty of created nature extends!

A palm tree grew by the side of the terrace wall. Seated on the parapet, his back resting against the tree's trunk, with his hands clasped and resting on his knee, the young soldier luxuriated in those quiet moments, and in the pure air that usually precedes the dawn.

Nature had bestowed on him the precious gift of being, from his very disposition, urged on to whatever is beautiful, virtuous and sublime. One only defect could be imputed to him, (if defect it can be called,) too much goodness. But, brought up as he had been from early years to the profession of arms, his correct judgement soon learnt what limit is of necessity required even to goodness itself, to prevent its degenerating into weakness; and the stern rigidity often acquired by being exposed to continual

dangers, became in a heart like his a proper firmness,—the worthy and valuable endowment of a manly bosom.

Fieramosca's father, a gentleman of Capua, of the school of Braccio da Montone, who had grown old in the wars that lacerated Italy during the fifteenth century, could not do otherwise than resign his sword to his son; and the youth early considered the military profession as the only worthy one; nor could he be expected at that age to have ideas superior to the time in which he lived, when force of arms had the certain effect of increasing wealth and reputation.

But his intellect increased with his age; and during the brief intervals of peace, instead of spending his leisure hours in hunting or jousts, and other common pursuits of youth, he was fond of studying literature, and becoming acquainted with the ancient authors, and the honourable deeds of those who had shed their blood for the good of their country, and not for the private interest of such as could pay them the most: he thought how wretched a profession that of a soldier was, if, after the manner of banditti, he carried it on for the sole purpose of enriching himself by plundering the weak, and not for the virtuous end of defending himself and his countrymen from foreign aggression.

In his early years he had accompanied his father, whom important business had called to Naples. At the court of Alphonso he was introduced to the celebrated Pontano, who, struck with the boy's beautiful person, mind and disposition, became much attached to him; and receiving him into the academy, since called the Pontanian Academy (although foun-

ded by Panormita), he began to instruct him with great earnestness, and obtained in return from the youth that reverent affection which is commonly inspired by gratitude united with admiration.

The love for his country and for Italian glory, awakened by the eloquent words of his master, could not remain cool in a heart like his; and in fact it increased almost to a degree of mania. He fought sword to sword with a French gentleman, his superior in age and strength, because the latter had spoken ill of the Italians—wounded him, and compelled him to confess the wrong in the presence of the king and court. Having left Naples, after various vicissitudes, he met with those misfortunes of love which were hinted at by the French prisoner. But when Italy was overrun by Charles the Eighth, and the French arms held the whole of it either in subjection or fear, his patriotism was still more warmly excited on seeing how the invaders seemed disposed to tyrannize over his country. He was enraged when he heard of their insolence in passing through Lombardy, Tuscany, and the other Italian states. And when report was spread of the fierce answer given by Pier Capponi to the king, and that the latter had yielded, he rejoiced beyond measure, and praised the bold Florentine to the skies.

On the fall of the royal family of Naples, Fieramosca followed the fortunes of Spain, in order to oppose in some manner the other too predominant power; and because Spanish pride appeared to him less intolerable than the vainboasting of the French: besides, it seemed to him that an enemy who could only reach them by sea might be held of smaller ac-

count, and he considered that if the French could be driven out by their arms, it would be a less arduous enterprise to establish a good state of things in Italy.

As the daylight appeared in the east, the stars one after another vanished, and the last soon disappeared: already the sun illumined the summits of Gargano, tinging them with a rosy hue, that became purple in the shady hollows of the mountain; whilst the shore below it, extending in a crescent form till it joined the beach on which Barletta is situated, displayed as day advanced a soft and diversified mixture of valleys and slopes that descended to bathe themselves in the sea.

The thick chestnut groves, whose tops were already gilded by the sun's rays, which afterwards spread completely over them, were interrupted here and there by green turf, and sometimes by land in a state of cultivation. In one place a steep exposed a white stony surface, in another the hill-side was tinted with yellow or reddish colours, according to the nature of the soil. The blue sea seemed motionless, save that, flowing against the rocks, it girded their base with a streak of snowy froth.

At the innermost part of the gulf, on an islet connected with the land by a long narrow bridge, there rose from amidst palms and cypresses a convent, with a small church and a belfry, inclosed within fortifications of small towers and battlements, intended to preserve it from *coups de main* of corsairs or the Saracens.

Hector stood gazing towards it with feelings of intense passion, straining his eyes, for the mist which

at that hour covered the lower lands, scarcely allowed him to distinguish the form of the building. With stretched ear he caught the faint sound of the convent bell sounding the morning *Ave Maria*, and was so completely wrapt up in his thoughts, that he did not hear the voice of Inigo, who had been calling him in the court-yard, and not obtaining an answer had ascended in search of him. "After such a day as yesterday," said Inigo, coming upon the terrace, "I should not have thought you would have risen before the sun."

He who has ever had his heart full of one great and absorbing thought, may imagine if it was pleasant to Fieramosca to be interrupted in it and constrained to dismiss it suddenly. He turned round with a countenance that did not entirely conceal his feelings, and Inigo might have guessed that he had not arrived opportunely. But Hector's mind was too well regulated and too affectionate to allow him to blame his friend for this involuntary disturbance. Without giving any precise answer, he went to meet him, pressed his hand, and at length, being quite himself again, said pleasantly, "What good wind has brought you here at this hour?"

"The best wind possible; I bring you such news as you may well thank me for; and for this reason I could hardly wait for daylight, but here I have come to bring it to you. I have always envied you your virtue, and today I can't help being envious of your good fortune. Happy you, my Hector! Heaven has provided an enterprise of honour for you, that you would have bought, I am certain, at

any price: and here it is before you, without having caused you either expense or trouble. You *are*, truly, a lucky being!"

Fieramosca led his friend into the house, and making him take a seat opposite to him, sat down himself, waiting to hear his good fortune. His friend related to him briefly the occurrences of the preceding evening, the manner in which he had taken the part of the Italians, and the proposed challenge. When he came to La Motte's insolent expressions, (and he repeated them exactly,) the enraged Italian started on his feet, dashing his fist on the table, his eyes flashing with the fiercest joy: "We are not yet so far gone in wretchedness," cried he, "that we want hands and swords to drive down the throat of this French villain what in an evil hour for him he has allowed to escape from his mouth: and blessings on your tongue, Inigo, my brother, (and he embraced him,) I shall be everlastingly indebted to you for the care you have taken of our honour; neither in life nor in death will my obligation to you cease." And the shaking of hands and congratulations seemed as if they were to be endless. Their ardour being, however, a little quieted, "It is necessary now to act, and not to talk," said Fieramosca; and calling a servant, whilst he was dressing, he went on reckoning the companions that should be selected for the enterprise, endeavouring to think of as large a company as possible. "There are many," said he, "many good ones amongst us, but the affair is too important; we must choose the very best. Brancaloneo—there's one. There won't be a French lance that will bend him one inch, with that pair of shoulders of his. Ca-

poccio and Giovenale,—and they are all three Romans, and I can answer for it the Horatii did not wield the sword better than they. There are three: let us go on. Fanfulla da Lodi, that mad, spirited fellow,—you must know him?"

Inigo raised his head, frowning a little and compressing his lips, as people do when trying to remember something. "Oh yes, you know him; that Lombard, one of the free lances* under Signor Fabrizio,—the man that galloped his horse along the wall of the bastion at the gate of St. Bacolo."

"Oh! yes, yes," answered Inigo, "now I recollect him."

"Well, that makes four. That man, as long as he has any hands, will know what to do with them. I will be the fifth, and with the help of God, I will do my *devoir*. Masuccio!" said he, calling a servant, "I think I broke the strap-brace of my shield yesterday; let it be repaired quickly, do you hear? and let the large sword and the cut-and-thrust dagger be both ground, and—what was I going to say?—Oh! is my Spanish armour all complete and in order?" The servant signified assent.

Inigo was smiling at this haste, and said, "You will have time enough to prepare yourself, for the combat will neither be today nor tomorrow."

Fieramosca did not think of this, for he was in an absolute fever, and would have wished to go to

* These were a species of gentlemen-volunteers, often comprising knights of celebrity. They might choose their own service, and were expected to provide themselves with horses, armour, baggage, &c., and were usually accompanied by esquires and other followers.

work without delay ; and paying little attention to what his Spanish friend was saying, he continued trying to think of more companions, for five seemed too small a number. He then said aloud : " And why should we leave out Romanello da Farli ? that's six. Lodovico Benavoli : seven. You know *him*, at all events ; you have seen what he can do. Masuccio ! Masuccio ! "

And up came the servant again in a great hurry : " There's my charger, Airone ; the one Signor Prospero gave me—let him have good allowance of corn ; and before the heat of the day, exercise him for about an hour, and have an eye to his shoes. "

He had been dressing himself whilst giving these orders ; the servant then put his cloak on ; and having armed himself, and placed on his head a cap with an azure plume, he said to Inigo, " I am ready for you. The first thing to be done is to talk the matter over with Signor Prospero, and then speak to Gonsalvo about safe conduct for the parties. "

Having gone out into the street, he still continued naming, as they went along, one and another man-at-arms, who might be fitted for the occasion. Nor was he satisfied with any at first ; but went into a minute review of the state, the strength, bravery, and past life of all of them, so that none but tried men should be admitted to join so great an enterprise. He valued Brancalone the Roman beyond every other, because he knew him well to be a particularly efficient soldier, of great courage and extraordinary bravery ; moreover, the serious character of the man, so different from the careless humour of

his other companions, pleased him, and he felt a friendly disposition towards him, so much so, that he had many times been on the point of revealing to him the affair with Ginevra ; but a certain reserve, and perhaps the want of a convenient opportunity, had prevented his doing so hitherto. His family and ancestors having been Ghibellines, they had always espoused the cause of the Colonna family, and now, in the troops under the command of Signor Fabrizio, he was at the head of a certain number of free-lances, and well attended to this, as to every other military duty. He was of the middle height, with great breadth of shoulders and ampleness of chest ; silent in general, and always solely intent upon his own duty ; tenacious and even obstinate in following his own plans, and not having another thought in the world than that of aiding and rendering victorious the Colonnese party, in comparison with which everything else was of no account to him. To obtain this, he would have suffered being cut in pieces a thousand times.

Hector and Inigo passed his door on their way to the house of the brothers Colonna ; they found him employed in giving orders respecting some of his horses, and with his sword ungirded and the belt wrapped round the hilt, he was making signs to the servants and grooms, and making them understand him with the least possible waste of breath. Fieramosca invited him to accompany them, to assist in organizing so great an affair, and though he expressed himself in the warmest terms, Brancaleone listened to him with perfect composure and without changing countenance in the slightest degree. He merely said,

"The blind require the evidence of touch before they believe: four thrusts after my fashion, and we will talk it over afterwards." And this confidence was not bravado; for many times had he been surrounded in the French camp, and had always come off honourably.

CHAPTER IV.

THE insulting words of La Motte, and the challenge which had followed, having passed in the presence of more than twenty persons, could not remain a secret, and indeed the report of it was spread through the army and throughout the town. On Inigo and the two Italians arriving at the house of Prospero Colonna, they found nothing else talked about there; and already the flower of the Italian youth began to appear, who hurried to him as their chief to know in what manner it was advisable that they should act. All whom Fieramosca had named came one after another, and many besides; so that in a short space of time, there were nearly fifty assembled. There was plenty of bold speaking, and every one showed in countenance and by gestures, how he was stung by the injury that had been offered them. Several of the Spaniards who had been present at the supper the evening before, and had been speaking of it to their Italian friends, had come there also, and mingled amongst them, repeating now this and now that speech both of Inigo and of the prisoners; and by

making comments, giving advice and citing precedents, they raised a flame which had been burning already pretty fiercely of itself.

Of the party assembled, some stood about the great gate, and dispersed through the courtyard, and the others in a hall on the ground-floor, in which the brothers Colonna were accustomed to give audience to their followers when necessary, and to despatch the affairs of the regiment. Suspended on its walls shone their suits of armour, richly wrought in gold, finely inlaid, and as bright and polished as mirrors. There was also in this room the banner of the regiment, on which was embroidered a column in a field *gules*, with the motto "*Columna flecti nescio*," the device being likewise painted on the shields which, with other arms disposed tastefully around, almost covered the walls. In a recess two large wooden horses supported two complete suits of horse-armour, with the saddles and housings of fine crimson velvet embroidered with their family coat-of-arms, and the rich trappings ornamented with gold lace; the whole worthy of such noble gentlemen.

Six falcons, hooded and tressed, were attached to a cross-bar of the window by a small silver chain; there was also a quantity of apparatus for hunting, an amusement much indulged in by the nobility, and considered proper pastime for lords and gentlemen.

After a few moments, Signor Prospero Colonna appeared, and the usual tokens of respect were offered to him on his entering. Advancing and bowing with graceful dignity to the company, he reclined on a large arm-chair covered with red leather, placed at the head of a table in the middle of the room which

held his *escritoire*, and courteously gave the signal for each to take his seat.

He was attired in a cloak of black figured calimanco, with a rich gold chain round his neck, from which was suspended and reposed on his chest a medallion of the same metal exquisitely chased. In his girdle he wore a small dagger of curiously wrought steel; and although in a simple costume, his dignified demeanour, his complexion of a pallid and rather dusky hue, and his lofty forehead, expressive of courage and understanding of no ordinary degree, inspired that reverence which is oftener rendered to intellectual endowments than to the favours of fortune or birth.

The present occasion appeared, and was, of unspeakable importance to him, not only because it affected the glory of the Italian arms, but because, in the actual circumstances of the two great contending powers, the issue of the affair might be productive of very serious consequence to him, to his family, and to the whole Colonnese party. The coming off victorious in a combat which was certain to excite a great sensation, would add much to the reputation of his men and his banner; and moreover, whether the French or the Spanish should remain victorious at the conclusion of the war then waging, the conquering power would be less disposed to offend him, and have greater interest in procuring his friendship.

Besides, it is known to all what an obstinate contest had been carried on between the Colonnese and Orsinese factions; and that these, having been ill-treated both forcibly and by the frauds of Alexander VI. and Cæsar Borgia, could only hope to repair

their losses by foreign assistance, or their own valour aided by some fortunate occasion. If, therefore, ever there was a time when it was necessary to seize on a favourable opportunity, it certainly was the present one.

The sagacious leader well knew Fieramosca's ardent temperament, and how powerfully it was acted upon by thirst for glory and love of his country: he had also seen how often the speeches of Fieramosca had incited his companions to show themselves true Italians, and he felt his value especially at this time, to aid by example and words in fanning that flame of divine ardour which renders man capable of the noblest enterprises.

To him then he first addressed himself, saying that he was partly acquainted with what had taken place, but wished to have more detailed information on the subject, in order to be enabled to direct them how to act, without further delay. Hector explained the whole affair, giving the words that had been spoken by Inigo in favour of the Italian nation their full effect. When he had finished, Signor Prospero standing up spoke as follows: "Noble gentlemen! if you were not what you are, and I, from my companionship with you in so many battles, had not had actual experience of your lofty bravery, I might think it necessary to remind you how our ancestors, by their valorous deeds, raised this country to such a pitch of glory that the universe was dazzled with it; nor have the darkness and misfortunes of ten centuries yet extinguished the last rays of its splendour. And there was a time when those who have now crossed our mountains to gorge themselves with Ita-

lian blood, and, not content with that, add insulting scorn to their other offences, trembled at the *name* of a Roman! I would tell you that to such a pass has their unbridled insolence arrived, that after having plucked off (and God knows with what arts!) the glorious crown which made Italy the queen of nations, and which was bought at the expense of so much sweat and blood, it seems to them that they have done nothing, as long as they see swords in our hands and armour over our breasts; but they would e'en deprive us of the means of fighting and dying to preserve our honour. I would say to you, then, Up and be doing! let us rush forward, let us fall like heaven's thunderbolts upon these rapacious robbers, these contemners of our rights! and well can I conceive that my words would be too tardy for the flash of your Italian swords. But in place of this, my duty as your leader, (a duty but too severe on such an occasion,) compels me to put a restraint on your valour, and to tell you that you cannot *all* enjoy the privilege of this combat, but that the glorious revenge will be worked out by the swords of an enviable *few*. The noble Gonsalvo, being obliged with inferior numbers to support the rights of his Catholic Majesty, would not consent that the blood of his soldiers should be spilt in any cause but that. For ten men-at-arms I hope I shall succeed in obtaining safe conduct and a fair field. Without spending more time I will at once go, and return to you as soon as I have obtained my desire. In the mean time let each gentleman write down his name, and Gonsalvo will make the selection. But first of all,

you must swear to abide by what shall be determined by him."

This address was received with a buzz of approbation, and all took the oath. The names were written down, and handed to Signor Prospero, who rose from his seat and went to the door, where two servants were in waiting with a mule ready saddled: he mounted, and attended by the two servants only proceeded to the citadel.

After the space of about half-an-hour, which seemed an age to the anxious impatience of the young men assembled, he returned, dismounted, and entered the hall, all occupying their previous places; the dead silence, and the expression of the eyes all intently fixed on the Roman baron, showed the degree of raging curiosity to know what was the selection, and the hope that it might be a favourable one.

"The noble Gonsalvo," said Signor Prospero at length, drawing from his bosom the list, and laying it on the table, "expresses himself much satisfied with your brave intentions; he is certain that the enterprise will be an easy one to valour like yours, and he grants safe conduct and a fair field for *ten* men-at-arms: I have had no small difficulty in bringing him as far as that number; the importance of the matter alone has induced him to bend."

Having then unfolded the paper containing the names of the chosen few, he read them aloud as follows:

"Hector Fieramosca."

Hector, finding himself named the first, joyfully

grasped the arm of Brancaleone who sat next to him, whilst all eyes were directed towards him, showing that no one wished to contest with him the post of honour.

“Romanello, of Forli.

Hector Giovenale, Roman.

Mark Carellario, Neapolitan.

William Albimonte, Sicilian.

Miale, of Troja.

Riccio, of Parma.

Francis Salamone, Sicilian.

Brancaleone, Roman.

Fanfulla, of Lodi.”

If any one had been present in this assemblage of persons, without knowing a single being amongst them, he might easily have found out by their happy countenances those whom fortune had admitted to a share in the noble enterprise. The usually pallid countenance of Fieramosca became suffused with bright vermilion, and in his hurried sentences to his companions the auburn mustachios which clothed his lip trembled so as to give evidence of his internal emotions. His most cherished thoughts now found an opportunity of producing deeds worthy of them. “At length,” said he inwardly, “Italian blood will flow to better purpose than that of always siding with foreign invaders!” If it could have been foretold to him at that moment, Your party will conquer, but you will die, he would have been a thousand times contented: but he had hope, and more than hope,—he had almost a certainty of conquering, and living to enjoy the victory; and he thought how glorious

would be his return, accompanied by feastings and joyfulness; (how rarely man foresees the truth!) he imagined to himself the praise, the eternal renown, that would crown his country and his own name, and how proud those who were dearest to him would be of his brave deeds. At this point a thought rose up from the depths of his heart, and passing onwards like a cloud obscured for a moment the joy that shone brightly from his countenance; past misfortunes, perchance, made him feel in his bosom the sharp thorn of melancholy recollections: but it lasted only for an instant. At that hour, could he have any care more engrossing than the important combat in which he was to be engaged?

Prospero Colonna had been selected by Gonsalvo as marshal of the camp, the duties of which office consisted in sending the challenge in writing, in seeing that his party were completely armed, mounted, and equipped, and wanted nothing to enable them to obtain the victory, and lastly to take care that the battle should be fought according to the just laws and customs of similar combats.

The first considerations were to fix the time and place. The month had just commenced; it was therefore determined to fix the middle of it for the combat, in order to allow time for preparation. As to the place, experienced men were to be sent out to find one that would best suit both parties.

After this was settled, the *cartel* of defiance was written in French, and given into the hands of Fieramosca and Brancaleone, who were to convey it to the French camp that same day. Having disposed of these preliminaries, Signor Prospero turned to-

wards the ten favoured men, and said : " Our honour, Cavaliers, rests on the edge of your weapons, and I cannot conceive a more worthy and sure place for it. But for this reason, it is necessary that you should all swear not to engage in any other enterprise from this day until the day of the battle, that you may run no risk of being wounded, or of encountering any other obstacle to your appearing in the field on that day ; for you may easily perceive that our party might be exposed to disgrace should any such thing occur, no matter what might be the real cause of it." This appeared but reasonable, and all without hesitation signified by oath their assent to the proposition.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the party, who ascertained with sorrow that *they* were not to be engaged in the matter, going away one by one, at last left the ten remaining by themselves. They also went out of the hall after the *cartel* had been consigned to Fieramosca, and the latter accompanied by Branca-leone went home to prepare immediately for their journey to the French camp.

They accordingly both armed themselves lightly with coats of mail and steel caps, and taking a trumpeter with them proceeded towards the gate of St. Bacolo, the gate looking in the direction of the enemy. The portcullis was raised, and the drawbridge let down for them, and they took their way through one of the suburbs, half destroyed and burnt during the late turmoils by the licentiousness of the soldiery, and entirely deserted by its inhabitants. The road then wound along between a number of gardens on either side, and afterwards came out into the open country ; and there was still an hour's journey for

them ere they could reach their destination. Whilst passing the suburbs before mentioned, Hector had met with some poor women only half-covered with rags, some leading children by the hand, and others with infants in their arms, who were searching through the abandoned houses to see if anything remained there from the plunder of the rapacious soldiers. The heart of the young man was touched at this spectacle, and being unable to afford them relief, and still less to bear the sight of their sufferings, he put spurs to his horse, and they proceeded at a rapid pace until they came into the open country.

The unwonted cheerfulness which had been excited in his breast, when thinking of the approaching combat, had, through this apparently trifling incident, become changed into deep sorrow. Sterner thoughts on his country's wrongs rose up within him, and stronger indignation against the authors of them. He could not conceal from Brancaleone, who rode by his side, the pity which the misery of those wretched beings had excited; and his companion, who at bottom was a good and kind-hearted man, though from constantly exposing himself to dangers and deeds of blood his character might sometimes appear rather harsh, sympathised with him, and grieved with him for their miseries.

Fieramosca, seeing him in this state of mind, said, at the same time shaking his head, "These are the beautiful gifts that the French present us with! this is the comfortable state they bring us to! But if I can once see that crew on the other side of the Alps—" and he was going on to say, "we will soon manage to get rid of the Spaniards also;" but recollecting that

he was in their service, he broke off his sentence in the middle, and concluded with a sigh.

Brancaleone thought more about the Colonnese party than the good of his country, and could not enter completely into his friend's sentiments; but he did in a certain degree, and after his own fashion, and replied: "If this army could be routed, very little time would pass before we might taste the wine of Signor Virginio Orsino; and the cellars in the castle of Bracciano would see for once the shape of Christian faces; and Palestrina, Marino, and Valmontona would no longer behold their plains smoking by the hands of those rascals, nor hear every now and then that cursed cry, 'Orso! Orso!'—but every Saturday is not a pay-day!"

Hector gathering from this answer that, if Brancaleone agreed with him in his wishes, he was very far from agreeing entirely with his motives, ceased talking, and they proceeded a considerable way without silence being broken by either of them. The trumpeter preceded them by about the distance of a bow-shot.

The reader will not have forgotten the hints that dropped from the French prisoner respecting Fieramosca's love affairs. His companions, who then heard them spoken of for the first time, were sorry for his misfortunes, both on account of the affection they felt towards him, and because in a company of young men every one is expected to add his share to the general stock of hilarity. During the morning, whilst the subject of the challenge had been discussed at the house of Signor Prospero, there was a whispering about these love matters, which of course came to

the ears of Brancaleone. Brancaleone was a man who indulged but little inquisitiveness in other people's affairs: nevertheless, having travelled on such a distance in total silence, and seeing his companion so immersed in melancholy, he compassionated him; and conquering his own rough disposition, he endeavoured to obtain his confidence; and addressing him with words of friendly solicitude, at length entreated him to relate the cause of such excessive and continual sadness. He succeeded in the attempt. Fieramosca knew him to be trustworthy; and the situation in which he found himself freed his tongue; for secrets easily escape from a bosom agitated by strong passions. Raising his countenance slightly, he said, "Brancaleone, you ask me a thing that I have never mentioned to a living being; nor would I mention it to you—do not be offended—if I did not think that I may possibly be killed in the approaching combat. And then, what would become of—yes, yes, you are a true friend, you are a man worthy of my confidence, you ought to know all. You must not be impatient if my story should be rather long, since it is impossible for me to compress within a few words so many and such strange incidents."

Brancaleone by his gestures showed how deeply he was interested in the subject; and accordingly Fieramosca, with a sigh, resolutely commenced his narrative.

"When there arose the first rumours of war on the part of the Most Christian King, who threatened a descent upon this kingdom, you well know I was a youth about seventeen years of age, and in the service of *the Moor*. I took my leave of him, as it

appeared to me that I ought to devote my life to the defence of the royal family of Aragon, who had so long governed us. I arrived at Capua: the army was then being organised, and I was introduced by the Count Bosio di Monreale, and employed in the defence of the town. Our fortifications were in complete readiness; and there being nothing else to do, we passed our time in the manner most agreeable to ourselves. I spent my evenings at the house of the Count, who was a friend of my father's, and treated me as if I were his own son.

“ On former occasions, before I engaged under the Duke of Milan, I had often visited at his house. I there became acquainted with his only daughter; and both of us being mere children, we became wonderfully attached to each other, without dreaming of future consequences. The day I set off for Lombardy, the lamentations at parting were indescribable. I recollect I rode a most beautiful jennet, and in passing under her windows (her name was Ginevra), I showed off my horsemanship in waving an adieu to her. Unseen by her father and every one else, for it was hardly daylight, she threw me an azure scarf, which I have worn ever since.

“ But these were trivial matters. During my year's service this first love of mine had cooled considerably. But having returned, as I have told you, and again seen Ginevra, whose figure had become more womanly, and who was now the loveliest girl in the kingdom, was well read, and played enchantingly on the lute, I could not avoid falling in love with her again,—a love the warmest and maddest that mortal ever heard of. She recollected our friendship in for-

mer times, and saw me return with some honour and military fame ; and although she was too modest to show it, I thought I could perceive that she listened with pleasure when I described the towns of Lombardy and the wars I had seen there, and related particulars as to the courts, and their manners and customs : and if she loved to hear me, I loved much more to entertain her ; and the affair went on so rapidly that in a short time we could not exist one inch apart.

“ On perceiving how strong this attachment had become, I began to reflect upon the trouble it might cause to both of us. The war might be expected to commence at any moment. Woe to him who at such a period is involved in the ties of love ! And if at first I sought every opportunity of being with her, now, on considering what conduct would be most proper, and knowing too well that our love consisted of more than words, I had fortitude enough to endeavour to show it less, and even to root it out of my heart. The affair remained in this state for a short space : but the struggle, instead of diminishing my affection, increased it ; and whilst desiring to put restraint upon it externally, the working of my inward emotions almost brought me to the grave. My countenance soon became pale and gloomy, and by night, though weary, I could not sleep ; but, with my imagination everlastingly fixed on her, I felt the scalding tears streaming down my cheeks upon my pillow, and I was astonished at myself.

“ Several weeks passed in this manner, until I was reduced to such a state that it became absolutely necessary for me to adopt some determined course.

You may guess which one I adopted. Late one evening I found her alone in the garden, and, as my fate would have it, I told her a great part of my feelings towards her ; but she, covered with blushes, retired, leaving me in greater misery than ever ; for from that hour she seemed always endeavouring to keep me at a distance, and hardly ever, even in the presence of others, addressed a word to me. This made me desperate ; and being unable to support this excessive and apparently unrequited passion, I resolved to submit to my fate, and to seek for death amidst the battles then raging. Just at that time, the company of the Duke di S. Nicandro marching through the town on their way towards Rome, where they were to join the Duke of Calabria, I took measures for joining them. Without mentioning my intention to her, I wished to make another last attempt, but found her to all appearance so inflexible, that I was persuaded that the love which I fancied I had perceived in her had been only a dream of my imagination. My resolution was then fixed—it was evening, the Duke's company was to be quartered in Capua that night, and proceed on their march in the morning—and I prepared everything for my departure the next day. I went as usual to spend the evening at the house of Ginevra's father. We three were alone round the table, and the Count and I played at backgammon. I took an opportunity of informing him how I had planned leaving the town the following morning, saying that I was weary of long inactivity, and was anxious to be in the midst of the war, if he was content to give me permission. The Count lauded my intentions, and I, with a cautious glance, not ex-

tirely deprived of all hope, looked to see what effect the announcement would have on Ginevra. Imagine the state of my mind when I saw her colour suddenly change, and her eyelids redden! She darted by stealth a glance at me, which spoke but too plainly. I was overwhelmed with doubt as to what I should do; but I could not now retract with honour; and I was compelled, at the moment when I felt myself the happiest being in the world, to fulfil my ill-omened intention of departure. Would to God that when I put my foot in the stirrup I had fallen down lifeless! it would have been the least of all evils both to her and me.

“I went to Rome—cursing on the way my unhappy lot—and arrived at the very time that king Charles was entering the town on one side, whilst our soldiers were in full retreat on the other. There was some slight skirmishing, and I pushed forward so far in the midst of some Swiss troops, that I was left for dead, with two serious gashes in the head, from which it was a long time before I recovered.

“I received these wounds near Velletri; and having been carried into the town for surgical attendance, I remained there two months without knowing anything about Ginevra or her father, except that I heard from time to time the dreadful intelligence which arrived from that part of the kingdom, and which was always magnified by the people of the house, and so mixed up with inventions that it was impossible to distinguish the real truth.

“My strength having returned, and wishing to be out of such a disagreeable situation, I mounted my horse one morning and went to Rome. It was in the

greatest disorder; and Pope Alexander, who had by no means appeared friendly to the King on his passing through, seeing now the affairs of the kingdom despatched, and hearing a whisper of a treaty between the Moor and the Venetians, which would oblige the French to return, stood on his guard, and, as well as he could, armed and fortified Rome and the castle. I dismounted, and immediately went to pay my respects to Monsignor Capece, who received me with kindness, and insisted on my taking up my abode with him.

“ In the meantime rumours were increasing in Rome, and the advanced guard of the King, composed of Swiss soldiers, being expected daily, the terror was very general, and every one was thinking of his own affairs.

“ At last the army arrived. The Pope with Valentino had fled to Orvieto. Part of the French were quartered in the city, the remainder out in the Meadows*; and they conducted themselves so well towards the citizens, that every one began to be reassured. After a few days the King marched towards Tuscany, but one or other of his commanders still continued passing through Rome, marching in detachments, so that there might be less difficulty in obtaining provisions. The fears of all became quieted, and they returned to their usual pursuits. As for me, my soul was eternally troubled with thoughts of Ginevra; and as soon as I could, consistently with my honour, I took leave of Monsignor Capece, in order to return home and obtain certain intelligence of her;

* *Prati*. A tract of country so called, near the castle of St. Angelo, between the Tiber and the Marian Hill.—*Author's note.*

for in all this time I had met with no one who could inform me respecting her.

"One morning at an early hour I set out on my way, intending to journey that day as far as Citerna; and from the Strada Julia, in which Monsignor resided, I proceeded by the Piazza Farnese towards the gate of S. Giovanni. Near the Coliseum I encountered a troop of French with their baggage. As they approached, I perceived that they were escorting a litter, on which one of their officers lay wounded; and by the bandages round his temples I saw that his head was injured. Having pulled up out of the way, I stopped a little to look at him, when I was suddenly startled by a piercing shriek; and turning round in the direction from whence it came, I saw Ginevra on horseback approaching with the remainder of the troop. But, O God! how she was changed! It was a miracle that I did not sink on the earth. I felt my heart beating under my breastplate; yet thinking what effect any behaviour of mine might have, I pretended to proceed on my way; but turning my horse round, I followed them to their quarters without once losing sight of them, agonized by the worst suspicions.

"You may well suppose that I had not the courage to present myself again to my friend, who by that time believed me some miles off; still less did I dare to see Ginevra, fearing as I did that if we met I should hear from her more than I could have borne to listen to; and though intensely anxious for the matter to be cleared up, I could not resolve on what I should do. My horse seemed disposed to carry me towards Monsignor's stables, and I found myself in the Banchi alla Chiavica, close to a shop belonging

to one Franciotto, called 'the Boatman,' on account of his business, which consisted in transporting merchandize from Ostia* to the principal quay. I knew him very well; and having dismounted and gone to meet him, I drew him aside, and told him that for certain reasons I had left Monsignor's house, and it was advisable that I should keep myself concealed. He thereupon offered me the use of a cottage he had in the suburbs, and immediately conducted me thither. I took the opportunity of telling him that I had just seen a young lady, whose family I knew, in the hands of some French troops, and I wished to ascertain how it had happened, that I might afford her assistance if it should be required. I pointed out to him the place where she had dismounted, and entreated him to use his best endeavours to find out, by means of the servants, and inform me, whether I could obtain my wish without being discovered. He was a shrewd fellow, and took the surest means of satisfying me. About midnight he came to me, and accompanied me to a tavern, where we found one of his young men, who had already treated one of the French commander's attendants with liquor and set him talking, and we arrived exactly at the proper time.

"Franciotto soon succeeded in making the man tell us what I would never have wished to hear. Respecting the lady, he related to us, that on the French arriving at Capua the inhabitants had made a fierce resistance; they accordingly entered by assault, and sacked and destroyed nearly the whole town; that his master, Claudio Grajano d'Asti, (this he told us was his name,) having, with a number of soldiers, entered the

* Mouth of the Tiber,

house of Count di Monreale,—who had been wounded in the assault, and borne there, no longer able to defend himself,—ascended into the chamber in which he was lying; and the daughter, throwing herself on her knees, committed her father and herself to his protection. Grajano appeared surly and ill disposed to accede; upon which the Count, raising himself on his elbow as well as he could, said to him, ‘Whatever I possess in the world shall be yours, and you shall have my daughter in marriage; only protect her from the hands of those creatures.’ Ginevra, trembling for her father’s life and for her own safety, offered no opposition. Two days afterwards the Count died.

“I bit my hands with rage when I thought that, had I been there, perhaps she might not have fallen into the power of this wretch; but there was no remedy. I rushed out of the tavern, and all night went wandering through the streets like one distracted, and was often on the point of destroying myself; but my hand was kept back by God’s mercy. The grief, the anguish of heart which I endured was such that words could not describe the thousandth part of it, accompanied too with spasms of the chest that took away my breath, and every now and then almost produced suffocation. Being unable to support any longer a life so painful, so wretched, I formed the wildest schemes, the maddest resolutions in the world; and, what with one or another of these ideas, I almost lost my senses. After being in this state several days, I determined one evening to try my fortune. Wrapped up in a cloak, with a large hat slouched over my eyes, I went to Ginevra’s house,

and knocked. A maid-servant opened one of the windows, and asked whom I wanted. 'Tell your mistress,' said I, 'that a person from Naples, bringing news of her family, wishes to see her.' I was immediately admitted, and shown into a parlour on the ground-floor, where I was left alone with a candle that emitted but a faint light. It seemed to me that I was now at the gate of Paradise; the next moment, that I was in the depths of hell. The struggle my feelings were enduring cost me so much, that my knees trembled with weakness, and I sunk exhausted on a seat. I waited a few minutes; they seemed a thousand years. On hearing footsteps descending the stairs, and the rustling of a female dress, I was almost deprived of the last spark of vitality. Ginevra entered the room, and stood at a little distance gazing at me; and I—would you believe it?—could neither speak nor move, nor utter a sound. But she had recognised me; she shrieked, fainted, and would have sunk on the ground, had I not caught her in my arms, and used means to recover her which the urgency of the case, and the fear of being discovered, demanded, and sprinkled her lovely face with water from a vase that was near us. But my hot tears showering down from my eyes and bathing her countenance were more effective, and recalled her to life. I seized her hand, and pressed it to my lips so passionately, that methought I felt my soul passing from me at that moment. After remaining thus but a short time, she tremblingly detached herself from me, and said in a voice that I could scarcely hear, 'Hector, if you knew my misfortunes—' 'I do know them,' I answered; 'I know them too well; and all I ask, and

all I desire now is to die near you, and see you occasionally whilst I remain alive.'

"Just then I heard a noise on the floor above us, and I almost felt my limbs congeal at the possibility of being discovered, and being thereby the cause of adding to Ginevra's woe. Taking my leave of her, therefore, with mute expressions, I anxiously left the house, finding myself rather less afflicted and disconsolate than previously.

"Meanwhile, her husband remaining ill of his wound, many French and other gentlemen and prelates visited him daily. Although the beautiful countenance of Ginevra showed that inward grief was consuming her, yet her surpassing loveliness, accompanied as it was by languor and paleness, had a certain impassioned expression which vanquished the hearts of all who beheld her. Amongst those gentlemen, her youthfulness, graceful manners, and heavenly features, every day awakened more wonder and admiration, and they were never weary of describing her charms to every one, so that the report of them soon reached the Duke of Valentinois. Even then there were many suspicious rumours afloat about that man: his brother, the Duke of Candia, had been found dead in the streets one night, not more than a month before, not without suspicion against him. Soon afterwards, having laid aside his cardinal's robes, he occupied himself in military affairs; and many strange things were said of him, so that people hardly knew what to think. Not long afterwards I strongly suspected that he had been struck by Ginevra's beauty; for I had to endure hearing people talk in a manner that I would have put a stop to, but that I was re-

strained by my consideration for her, and confined my rage within me in order not to expose the situation in which I stood.

"In the meantime, sometimes under colour of one pretence and sometimes of another, I had managed several times to go to her house, and became acquainted with that husband of hers; and if the sight of him did excite inexpressible passion within me, I bore it all willingly, and would have endured anything provided I could now and then go and see her. And yet I never at that period spoke words of love to her. No, I was too certain that it would have been a waste of breath: I knew her too well.

"This Grajano d'Asti was a commonplace character, neither handsome nor ill-looking, neither good nor bad; a very good soldier, nevertheless; but he would have entered into the service of the Turk if by so doing he could have obtained good pay. Ginevra's property made him rich enough, and he valued her as one does an estate, for its annual produce, and nothing else.

"Weeks passed away. In the evenings I could see Ginevra, for her husband did not suspect me in the least; and suffering as he did from his wound, which was a long time healing, and not understanding anything about love, he had other thoughts in his head; so I managed to be with her much oftener than at first.

"Meanwhile Valentinois, wishing to raise an army in order to take possession of Romagna, made much of Grajano d'Asti, who was now almost able to mount his horse. I was aware of his design, and an agreement was at once made between them. Grajano was to provide and have the command of five-and-twenty

lances, and upon terms with which he was well satisfied.

"The Duke came one evening to Grajano's house to complete the agreement, and there was a supper given, at which were present some French priests, and some lances who were without a leader, and intended to attach themselves to Grajano, who at that time accepted any one.

"I had some thoughts myself of offering my services, that I might follow the fortunes of Ginevra at the same time with those of Grajano; but, I know not why, I took no steps in the matter, and was not at his house that evening. I went wandering at night through the least frequented parts of Rome, racking my brain with a thousand suspicions, and unable to divest myself of some of the strangest ideas imaginable. For many days previously I had found Ginevra more cast down than ever; and I had fancied I saw now and then something mysterious passing over her countenance, something secret which she seemed endeavouring to conceal within her bosom. God knows in what a state of doubt and grief I passed that night! Who will deny that at times the heart speaks?

"The next day I go to the house late in the evening. When I am near the door I hear an unaccustomed noise within. A priest with the child of Araceli*, preceded by a torch, comes out: I rush into the house—(I was in a cold sweat)—and the servant informs me—'My lady is dead!'

* The holy child of Araceli, an image considered to possess miraculous powers, carried about to the houses of the dying.—*Author's note.*

"After supper, the evening before, she had been seized with a fainting-fit, but it was not considered anything serious. She was carried to a warm bed, and kept quiet, and remained in this state until the morning. The day advanced, and still she did not awake. A certain fellow, one Jacopo da Montebuono, who professed medicine, was sent for, and he found her almost cold. The wretch, instead of employing the most stimulant remedies, simply remarked that she had better be allowed to sleep on. He returned again, but it was too late; he was terrified, and exclaimed that she was dying, and made them send for the priest; and without a single remedy being suggested for this inexplicable disease, soon after the *Ave Maria* had been repeated by the priest, the disconsolate family were told by the medical man that the lady had breathed her last!"

Here Hector was obliged to break off his narrative, as they had come in sight of the French camp. The trumpeter advanced, giving a blast with his instrument, and he was met by a mounted soldier, who inquired what was his errand.

Having ascertained the nature of their visit, he informed the officer on guard in that place; and the latter, after looking at the letter from Gonsalvo to the Duke of Nemours, commander of the French army, requested Brancalone and Fieramosca to wait whilst he despatched a messenger to the Duke to obtain permission for them to enter the camp.

He offered them in the meantime the use of a tent, in which the guard of the barriers was quartered; but the two friends, on hearing that the commander's abode was still some distance off, determined to re-

main where they were, until the messenger should return with the answer.

They perceived near them a plot of green turf, from which rose a cluster of young oaks; the shade of these offered a delightful retreat from the scorching rays of the mid-day sun. The two warriors accordingly directed their steps towards them, and fastening their horses to the trees, they took off their helmets and sat down close together, leaning back against the trunks. A light sea-breeze was wafted against their faces most refreshingly, and whilst the one took up the thread of his story with new animation, the anxious curiosity of his friend to hear the end of it increased in like manner.

CHAPTER V.

FIERAMOSCA continued his narrative as follows: "Having lost Ginevra, the world with me had ceased to exist. I left the house with a stupified gaze; my eyes dropped not one tear; and where I went, or what became of me in those first moments, I should not have been able to tell you, had not the circumstances which happened afterwards forced me to know but too well: I was as a crazy thing, or as sometimes happens, you well know, when you receive a two-handed blow of a mace on your helmet, and for a short time you hear a rushing noise in your ears, and everything seems whirling round before your eyes. In this state, scarcely aware of what it was that had

taken place, I went along the bridge, (Ginevra's residence was close to the tower of Nona,) and onwards through the suburbs till I came into the Piazza di S. Pietro.

"That truly affectionate friend Franciotto, being partly acquainted with my misfortune, came in search of me, and found me extended on the ground at the base of a column, in what condition I am unable to say. I recollect feeling a pair of arms placed under mine; and being raised up in a sitting position, I then roused myself, and perceived that he was by my side. He began to comfort me with kind words, and by degrees I came to myself; he assisted me to rise, and conducted me home with some trouble: he then undressed me, made me go to bed, and sat quietly by my bedside, without annoying me by attempting to afford any consolation, for at that time it would have been too much out of place.

"We passed that night in silence. I was attacked by a violent fever, accompanied by occasional delirium. I fancied there was a gigantic figure cased in armour squatted on my breast, and I expected I should be suffocated.

"At last, afflicted nature relieved herself by weeping. It was shortly before sunrise, and the first dawn of morning shone through my window: my sword and other arms were suspended against the wall, and on raising my eyes, they fell upon the blue scarf that Ginevra had given me years before. That sight at once opened a course for my tears, which began flowing in torrents; and this relieving my breast, was the cause of my recovery. After weeping unceasingly for full an hour, I seemed a different being: I could

listen and converse, and by the help of the good Franciotto, I managed to exist through that day, and towards evening felt inclined to get up.

"Whilst returning to myself, I had been considering how I should behave under such a calamity. Going from one thought to another, I absolutely despaired of living; and considering what an insupportable death it would be to allow grief to consume me by inches, I came back to my original resolution, which was at once to fly after Ginevra's blessed spirit.

"Franciotto, who had been with me from the preceding evening, went out for a moment to attend to some business, and promised to return quickly. I laid hold of my dagger (the very one that is now by my side), and intended to carry my resolution into effect; but recollecting that Ginevra was to be buried that evening, I formed the resolution of seeing her once more, and dying near her. I attired myself in a plain suit and girded on my sword; I took that azure scarf, the only worldly thing of value to me, and left the house.

"Having passed along the bridge, I fell in with the funeral procession. The monks of the order of Regola walked two and two, with choirs of lay brothers, chaunting the *Miserere*: they proceeded by the Via Julia and Ponte Sisto, bearing the coffin covered with a pall of black velvet.

"I need hardly tell you how nearly I was lost on seeing this spectacle; but I reflected that, if not in life, at least in death we should be united, that we were travelling the selfsame road, and that one same chamber was about to receive us both. I followed,

filled with a sort of melancholy joy ; and all mundane ideas having left me, I allowed myself to be borne along, scarcely heeding whither I was going. Having passed along Ponte Sisto and along the other bank of the Tiber, we entered the church of Saint Cecilia.

"The bier having been set down in the same sacristy in which is the tomb of the son of Saint Francesca Romana, I stood apart leaning against the wall, whilst the priests chaunted the funeral service. At last the sound of the *Requiescat in pace* died away through the vaults.

"The place was then silently deserted, and I remained alone, almost in darkness, for there was no other light than that in front of a Madonna. The whispering and footsteps of those who had gone out became more distant, and then were heard no longer. Just at that moment tolled the hour of night, and the sacristan came through the church, jingling his bunch of keys, and proceeding to shut the doors.

"On passing near, he perceived me, and said, 'We are going to close the doors.' I answered, 'And I intend to remain.'

"He looked at me again, and then with a gesture as if he recognised me, he said, 'You belong to the Duke ; you have been too anxious. The door shall stand ajar, and since you are here, I may as well go about my own concerns ;' and without waiting for a reply, he went away.

"I had not given him much attention, yet these words roused me, and I knew not whether he or I were dreaming. What duke ? what door ajar ? what does this fellow mean ? thought I to myself.

"Yet thousands of miles from the truth, and to-

tally incapable of reasoning in those moments, and soon returning to my dreadful resolution, after waiting a short time, (all around was then quiet,) with a deadly shudder I approached the bier.

"I took off the pall, and drawing my dagger, which was strong and sharp, I set to work to open the coffin, and met with great difficulty in raising the nails by the aid of that weapon alone ; but I at length succeeded in taking off the lid.

"The lovely corpse was wrapped in a sheet, and attired in graveclothes of pure white. The desire seized me of viewing once more her angelic countenance. I threw myself on my knees, and began unfolding the veils which deprived me of that last comfort. I raised the last fold, and Ginevra's face was exposed : it had the appearance of a waxen figure. I bent down over her countenance, and by stealth, as it were, (for it seemed to me a crime,) I could not refrain from impressing a kiss on her lips. I felt those lips slightly tremble ! I thought I should have dropped down lifeless. 'Can thy pity, Almighty God,' I exclaimed, 'do thus much ?' and I extended my hand to her wrist and felt for the pulse. The palpitation of my heart almost suffocated me. The pulse beat ! Ginevra was alive !

"But think of my consternation at finding myself alone under such circumstances. If she should revive, thought I, and see herself in this situation, her terror would be sufficient to kill her outright. I knew not what course to pursue ; I raved. I then turned round and extended my arms toward the image of the Virgin, and prayed, 'O Mother of God ! give me power to save her, and I swear by thy

Divine Son that my intentions towards her shall breathe nought but purity.' And in my heart I made a solemn vow, should she again come to life, never to make a dishonourable proposal to her, and to obliterate for ever all notions of destroying her husband; which latter purpose had been previously determined in my mind, and I had planned at one time or another to put it in execution.

"To this prayer, offered up with sincerity of heart, Divine aid was not refused.

"My good Franciotto, who had left his house, as I before mentioned, on returning home had seen me go towards the bridge, and partly guessing at the truth, and in constant fear (as I afterwards learned from him) lest I should commit some desperate act, had followed me all the way. But, like a prudent man, he determined to speak to me and disturb me as little as possible in those moments, well knowing that my case was not one that would tolerate advice, but must be aided energetically when the proper occasion arrived. He entered the church with the other people, and remained there concealed in a dark corner; and he has oftentimes told me since, that when he saw me put my hand to my dagger, he was on the point of rushing forwards to seize hold of me, and was in readiness lest he should arrive too late; but seeing afterwards that I was occupied in opening the coffin, he stood where he was; and only at this moment, aware of the necessity, discovered himself to me. Before I had concluded my prayer I heard his footsteps. I turned round, and he was by my side. Prostrate as I was, I embraced his knees as one who had at once preserved both our lives,—as an angel

descending from heaven to my succour. Having raised myself on my feet, I began to consider which would be the easiest and least dangerous mode of conveying the lady out of that place. At last we took the velvet pall that had covered the bier, turning it the wrong side outwards, in order that, if she revived, she might not perceive in what dismal clothing she was enveloped; and having disposed the linen in which they had wrapped her so as to make as comfortable a bed as possible, we very carefully raised her out of the coffin, and softly laid her on this portable couch that we had prepared for her.

“ Poor Ginevra had not yet opened her eyes, but had occasionally emitted a sort of abrupt sigh. Franciotto searching about amongst some chests, by good fortune lighted upon some of the wine kept for the sacrament; and placing the narrow neck of the flask between her lips, succeeded in pouring a small quantity down her throat. It was but a little, and only to give a slight stimulus to her strength; for we had no wish that she should completely revive where she was. Afterwards, with the greatest care, I at the head, and Franciotto at the feet, taking hold of the pall, we raised it up, and without accident, through the blessing of the Holy Virgin, succeeded in carrying her out of the church; and by way of S. Michele we arrived on the quay where the boats are kept. Amongst these was one belonging to Franciotto: it was impossible to have thought of a better or safer place: we carried Ginevra into it and accommodating her as well as we could, with a sort of bed under an awning, in which we were assisted by two or three men in the boat, I placed myself by the bed-

side, and Franciotto ran for a barber-surgeon, a friend of his, and a man who could be trusted, in order that she might have his medical assistance and be bled if necessary.

“Franciotto was obliged to pass by the church of St. Cecilia. On arriving there he perceived a group of armed men standing near the door, and at first thought they must be the guard. He went creeping along softly under the wall, until he succeeded in concealing himself at a short distance from them, and then ascertained that they were anything but the guard; for there were nearly thirty of them, and they had arms of all sorts, from pikes to two-handed swords. Near them was an empty litter borne by two men. The personage who commanded them stood looking towards the church, enveloped in his mantle, and was stamping first one foot and then the other, evidently with the greatest impatience. In a little time two servants came out of the church, and approaching him exclaimed, ‘Your Excellency, the coffin has been broken open, and is empty!’

“These words had such a potent effect, that the personage addressed, throwing aside his mantle, lifted a lantern which he had under it, and struck the servant such a blow on the head, that the latter fell instantaneously; and the other man might have come off worse, if he had not run away, for his master had already put his hand to his sword. After storming a little, the latter went away in a rage.

“Franciotto had noticed amongst the armed men one in particular, with a cloak or mantle significant of his profession; and by the light of the torches which they had with them he immediately recognised that

villain the doctor Jacopo da Montebuono. The presence of that fellow in such a place, and with such companions, excited the strangest suspicions.

"When they had all departed, he followed them at a distance; and instead of going for the barber, thought he would make doctor Jacopo serve his purpose. His only fear was that some of the men might accompany him to his house: but, as God pleased, the doctor resided at the end of the Longara, and when he came to Ponte Sisto, thinking to take the shortest way, he left the others, who proceeded along the bridge, and he went homewards. Franciotto overtook him under the arch, and telling him not to be alarmed, entreated him to go with him to the Great Quay, where there was a young woman just dying; and he succeeded in bringing him to us.

"When the doctor came on deck, he recollected me and Ginevra immediately, and perceived that he had fallen into a trap. Franciotto, drawing me aside, related to me all that he had seen and heard; and on reflecting, the mystery was cleared and I guessed the nature of the whole transaction. I seized hold of the doctor, and by threats (he was the most cowardly fellow in the world) I made him confess: he then acknowledged that, by order of Duke Valentino, he had given the lady on the evening of the supper a medicated draught, by virtue of which she remained in a state of stupor; and that he assisted in the deceit and declared she was dead, in order that she might be carried into the church, and the Duke might take the opportunity of going at night and removing her.

"It was really a miracle that a plot so well de-

vised should have failed ; and judge how grateful I was to God for it !

“ Turning to the doctor, I said, ‘ Listen to me, Master Jacopo : I have it in my power to kill you at this moment with this dagger, but I am willing to grant you your life on one condition,—that you restore that lady to hers ; for which purpose I would recommend you without further delay to make use of the proper remedies, if you are inclined to return home to your family alive. And if afterwards you tell a living soul the sequel of this affair, you shall die the death of a dog, whatever it may cost me.

“ The terrified doctor promised me everything that I required, and set himself right earnestly to work to restore Ginevra to herself : and accordingly consulting with Franciotto, we unmoored the boat, and sailing down the river soon arrived at Magliana. (The doctor, it seems, has never mentioned a word of this matter.

“ Meanwhile Ginevra had been restored to life, and opening her eyes, gazed around her in astonishment.)

“ Now that I had ascertained the certainty of her being alive, and it appearing to me that a miracle had been worked in my favour, I poured out my heart in gratitude to God on my knees by her pillow : we had lodged her in the cottage of a vinedresser.

“ After a short time, during which I held her hand in mine, on which she now reposed her cheek and now her lips, she suddenly withdrew it, and parting the locks that were shading my forehead she gazed steadily at me, and said at length, ‘ Ah ! are you not my Hector ?—but how—where are we ? This is

not my chamber!—I am not in my own bed!—O God! what has happened?"

"Here Franciotto, who looked in occasionally to see how the recovery was going on, appeared in the doorway. Ginevra gave a faint scream, and trembling like a leaf threw herself towards me, crying out, 'Help me, Hector! Look; 't is he! Holy Virgin, help me!' I earnestly attempted to re-assure her in the best way I could, but it was totally useless; she was so frightened at the sight of Franciotto that it seemed as if her eyes would start from their sockets. I perceived the mistake she was labouring under, and said, 'Ginevra, make yourself easy, it is not the Duke, but one of my best friends, who sincerely wishes you well.'

"On hearing this she laid aside all fear, and turned towards Franciotto as if to entreat pardon. Imagine how I cursed in my heart that other wretch!

"Ginevra then begged me to explain how she came there, but I entreated her to be contented for a time with trusting to my fidelity and in attending to her health, for she required repose. What I said to her had the effect of quieting her; and towards morning, having taken a cordial, she fell asleep.

"But I slept not. I knew too well it was madness to hope that I could induce her to stay with me; and if I could, perhaps, in spite of her wishes as well as my own, she might be obliged to return to her husband before she entirely recovered her strength. I accordingly despatched Franciotto with all haste to Rome, to gain information as to how matters stood there, and what was said respecting this affair.

"He returned towards evening with the intelli-

gence that Valentinois had marched with his army towards Romagna, accompanied by Grajano and his company. It was not known what enterprize was first to be undertaken.

“ I informed Ginevra of this, and having made her acquainted with all that had occurred, she wavered between a thousand doubts as to what resolution she should adopt. I argued with her at some length that in no point of view could it be advisable for her to return to Rome, since in that case Valentinois would easily discover her, and would take care to amend his first false step: that her husband, entirely occupied with military affairs, and being a creature of the Duke, would find it difficult, were he inclined, to act as her protector; and, besides, how were they to trace his movements? I entreated her, with the warmest emotion, not to oppose an almost divine interposition, which had re-united us in such an extraordinary manner, and rescued her from a situation full of treachery and dangers: I begged that she would consider, that by leaving that place we might without suspicion, from the supposition existing that she was dead, go to some part of the country where she might live in security and peace, and await the future fortunes of her husband and her own; and closing my words with a solemn vow, I said these words, ‘ Ginevra! I swear by the Holy Virgin that you shall reside with me as if I were your parent.’ Franciotto assisted me in my arguments; so that at last Ginevra, with many sighs, and unable entirely to overcome a certain degree of remorse that she felt, said to me, ‘ Hector! you shall be my guide:

it remains with you to prove that Heaven, and nought else, has sent you to me.'

"The determination being come to, I made another little speech to the doctor, with my hand on my dagger, and then sent him back to Rome in company with Franciotto, from whom I parted with much sorrow. Having gone on board the boat with our small quantity of baggage, we sailed down the river to Ostia, and then coasted towards Gaeta. The kingdom was still in the hands of the French, and Valentinois being their ally, I did not consider myself safe until I found myself some hundred miles out of their way. I accordingly proceeded on my voyage as rapidly as I could without causing Ginevra too much fatigue, being anxious to leave that coast at a distance; and, as it pleased God, we arrived one evening at Messina. I was truly grateful to Heaven for having preserved us from so many dangers."

On Fieramosca's reaching this point of his narrative, a number of horsemen were seen to leave the camp in the distance, and to come towards where they were sitting; so that he added, "Many particulars remain to be told, but those men are coming, and I should not have time; therefore I will finish my story. We passed about two years in that town: Ginevra retired to a convent, and I gave out that I was her brother, and visited her as frequently as I could.

"During this time the war had been re-kindled between the Spaniards and the French. The life I led appeared to me at last too unworthy of a soldier and an Italian. Bound as I was by the vow made in the

church of St. Cecilia, I was unable to hope that our love could have a virtuous consummation.

"All Italy was in arms, and the French appeared the strongest party. Besides my love of my country, which urged me on to assist in combating the enemy who was most dangerous, I had a deep-planted inveterate hatred against the French and their insolent boastings. I thought I perceived too, to tell the truth, more security for Ginevra under the protection of the Spanish standard, where it would be more difficult for Valentinois to reach her.

"The force of this reasoning was acknowledged by the spirited Ginevra, who, notwithstanding her affection for me, could not bear that I should remain in the back-ground whilst Italy was the subject of actual contest. We arranged everything, and writing to Signor Prospero, who was then organizing his battalion to act with Gonsalvo, I enlisted under his banner.

"He was at that time with his company at Manfredonia; so that we left Messina, and proceeded thither by sea. During the voyage a strange circumstance occurred.

"We had landed at Taranto; and having rested there, we left the harbour one morning to go to Manfredonia. It was the month of May, and there was a thick fog at sea. Our boat had two mizen sails and twelve oars, and we flew swiftly through the water, which was as smooth as glass. About mid-day we found ourselves close upon four ships, at about the distance of a musket-shot, and they made a signal for us to come to. We might have sailed away, and perhaps got off successfully, for the wind would

have favoured us ; but considering that they might damage us with cannon-shot, I determined to obey the signal.

“ It appeared that they were Venetian vessels coming from Cyprus, and bound for Venice, having on board the Queen Catherine Cornaro. Having made the usual inquiries, they gave us no further trouble, and we followed in their wake.

“ Night coming on, the fog increased, and I esteemed it good fortune to have fallen in with them, for they prevented our losing our track in that utter obscurity.

“ Near midnight, Ginevra was asleep, and only two of our crew were awake, to manage the sails and steer the boat ; and even they dozed from time to time. Seated on the prow I kept watch, immersed in thought. All was still. I thought I heard footsteps on the deck of the Queen's ship, which was half a bowshot a-head of us, accompanied by suppressed but evidently excited and angry words. I listened intently : a female voice was mingled with the others, and seemed to be begging for mercy. This was succeeded by lamentations, heard only at intervals, as if there was an attempt to smother them : at last I heard a splash in the sea, like that made by a falling body. With some anxiety I stood up, and looking very hard I thought I perceived something white floating on the surface of the water : I plunged in, and a few strokes brought me within reach of the object. I seized the end of a garment, and holding it fast with my teeth, returned to my boat, dragging a human body after me.

“ My men were awakened by the noise : they as-

sisted me in getting into the boat, and drawing on board what I had with me. We found it was a lady, with no clothes on but a *chemise*, and her hands bound with a cord. She gave no signs of life, but after we had applied the usual remedies she recovered. We allowed the Venetians to proceed on their voyage without us, and they took no further notice of us. We then hauled down our sails, and waited for day-break. The sun coming out, the atmosphere cleared up, and a few hours afterwards we were at Manfredonia, where we found Signor Prospero, and lodged Ginevra and the others at the tavern.

“You will wish to know who this lady was whom I saved from drowning; but I cannot satisfy your wish, for I do not know myself. Neither Ginevra nor I have ever succeeded in drawing out a word from her on the subject of her misfortunes, or respecting her previous life. She is certainly a native of the East, and a Saracen; one of the most upright, virtuous, and amiable women in the world, and at the same time so high-spirited and courageous that she is not in the least alarmed at the sight of arms or blood, and is more a man than a woman in the face of danger. From that day to this she has resided with Ginevra; and I arranged with the Abbess of St. Ursula to receive them both as boarders at the convent; where, owing to its vicinity, (now that the war keeps us shut up in Barletta,) I have the opportunity of visiting Ginevra very often.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE narrative was scarcely concluded, when the French arrived who were to conduct them to the camp. The two friends accordingly rose, mounted their horses, and accompanied their escort. They passed through the midst of long rows of tents and barracks, admiring the appearance and equipment of the men, who came out to ascertain the cause of their arrival; and, surrounded by a crowd of soldiers, they emerged on an open place formed by several pavilions disposed in a circle; in the centre of which, beneath a lofty oak, was erected that of the commander. There they found the flower of the French officers assembled: they dismounted, and were immediately admitted. After meeting with courteous but brief compliments on their reception, two stools were brought them, on which they took their seats, turning their backs to the entrance of the tent.

This tent or pavilion, lined with blue cloth spangled with fleurs-de-lis of gold, was of an oblong form, divided into two square apartments by four slender wooden pillars fluted with azure and gold. At the further end was a bed covered with leopard-skin, under which lay asleep two fine greyhounds. A table stood at a short distance, laden with a confused heap of phials, brushes, collars, and jewels; and over it was suspended a mirror, with a chased silver frame. This showed that the noble Duke did not disdain devoting some of his attention to the adornment of his person; and although a modern exquisite might have sought in vain through this *toilette* for the indispens-

able *Eau de Cologne*, he would have found perhaps a fair substitute in two large vases of silver-gilt plate, upon which were inscribed the words *Eau de Citre-bon* and *Eau Dorée*. Suits of armour of different fashions were suspended on the columns, after the manner of trophies, and lances of several sorts were placed crosswise on hooks.

Under these columns, in the centre of the pavilion, sat Louis d'Armagnac, Duke of Nemours, Viceroy of Naples, appointed by king Louis the Twelfth commander of the French army in Italy. He wore on this occasion a cloak of azure lined with ermine, and his features beamed with youthfulness, bravery, and chivalric courtesy. D'Aubigny, Ivo. D'Alegre, Bayard, Mgr. de La Palisse and Chandenier supported him on either side; and a host of barons and knights of less exalted reputation stood around, extending themselves in a circle, and inclosing Hector and Brancaleone in the centre. As for Brancaleone, he was infinitely more accomplished in the use of his arms than of his tongue; so he willingly left to Fieramosca the task of explaining the nature of their embassy.

Fieramosca stood up, and cast a rapid glance around amongst the bystanders,—a glance, in which flashed boldness but not insolence, for that would have been unbecoming the place, the audience, and the subject of his embassy. He related the insult offered to the Italians by La Motte, and proposed the challenge: and in order to fulfill the accustomed formalities, having unfolded the *cartel* of defiance, he read it in an audible voice. It was in the following words:

“ *Haut et puissant Seigneur Louis d'Armagnac, Duc de Nemours. Ayant appris que Guy de La Mothe,*

en présence de D. Ynigo Lopez de Ayala, a dit que les gens d'armes Italiens estoient pauvres gens de guerre, sur quoi, avec vostre bon plaisir, nous respondons qu'il a meschamment menti, et mentira toutes fois et quantes qu'il dira telle chose: et pour ce, demandons qu'il vous plaise nous octroyer le champ à toute outrance, pour nous et les nostres, contre lui et les siens, à nombre égal, dix contre dix.

"Die VIII Aprilis, MDIII.

"PROSPERO COLONNA.

"FABRITIO COLONNA."

Having read the challenge, he threw it down in the midst at the feet of the Duke, and Bayard took it up on the point of his unsheathed sword. Hector then proceeded with a sort of peroration; and was just finishing his speech, when his eye fell upon a highly furnished shield hanging opposite to him, and showing, as in a mirror, the persons of those behind him. He saw the figure of Grajano d'Asti reflected in it: and turning round with astonishment, he beheld the husband of Ginevra within two paces of him, standing listening with the others. This sudden and unlooked for discovery deprived the conclusion of his speech of that energy which he had been desirous of giving to it. Those unacquainted with the events of Fieramosca's life attributed to this circumstance a cause very far from the true one, and which did much wrong to Hector. Some of the French warriors smiled, and one of them remarked, that a man need not be considered very terrible, who could not speak of battle without being disturbed in countenance. Fieramosca perceived the gestures and caught the words, and his cheeks glowed with rage; but he restrained his feel-

ings, thinking within himself, "When we come to the proof, they shall see whether I tremble!"

The reply of the Duke abounded both in words and boldness; and the more, that he also had argued falsely from the troubled countenance of the Italian. The parley lasted but a few minutes, and the ambassadors had refreshment offered them in an adjoining tent; nor were their horses neglected.

It appeared that Grajano also had recognised Fieramosca, and he followed him on his leaving the Duke's presence. He came up to Fieramosca, and saluted him with a *nonchalance* often assumed by those who value wealth and rank more than virtue. He had known the latter when he was rather in humble condition, and it did not occur to him that he might have risen considerably in rank since their last meeting. "Oh," said he, "Mr. John—no, Mr. Matthew—the deuce is in it that I cannot recollect. However, it matters not: this is the way of the world,—those who are not dead we meet with again."

"Exactly so," answered Fieramosca, who in spite of his generous disposition, could not entirely overcome a feeling of vexation on seeing a man who he hoped was in the other world, alive, and the just possessor of her whom he loved more than his life. He mused some time, and struggled much in the endeavour to add something to that dry "*Exactly so*;" but it was all in vain, and he continued silent.

Grajano was not a character capable of perceiving delicate tints of feeling, and observing that the conversation flagged, accordingly proceeded: "Well, what is our occupation now? are we for Spain—hey?"

To Hector these interrogations in the plural seemed

to savour rather too much of familiarity or impertinence, and he replied, "What is *our* occupation?—*Yours* I know nothing of: *I* am a free-lance under Signor Prospero."

"Ha! ha!" said the Piedmontese laughing, "you should mind the proverb,

‘Orsin, Colonna e Frangipani
Riscuoton oggi e pagano domani*.’"

This was a current saying amongst the Italian soldiers of fortune, and had its origin in the scarcity of cash from which the barons of the Campagna of Rome frequently suffered, and which made them, therefore, more greedy in exactions from others than punctual in paying their own soldiers.

Fieramosca was not at this moment in a humour for enjoying jokes, and made no reply; nevertheless, not to appear uncourteous, he afterwards made inquiries as to the other's health, and asked why he had left the service of the Duke of Valentino? "Oh!" answered Grajano, "because the man requires too much, and has too many irons in the fire; and if the Pope should die one of these days, he will have to refund both principal and interest. But enough;—the less said of that gentleman, either of good or ill, the better. I have a good engagement here at present, and am so contented that I would not exchange situations with His Holiness."

During this dialogue they had arrived at the tent, where they found a cold collation prepared for them. After they were refreshed, and had finished their re-

* "Orsino, Colonna and Frangipani
Plunder today and pay tomorrow."

past, they were desired to attend the Duke for his answer to the challenge. This answer was, as might be expected, couched in haughty and boastful terms. It expressed the readiness of the French to engage in the proposed combat, but contained a wish that the number of combatants should not be ten but *thirteen*; the latter number being considered unlucky, and having been selected as a number of ill omen to the Italians. A sealed letter for Gonsalvo was consigned to the messengers; and also, separately, a list of the combatants selected on the French side.

Having taken leave of the commander they returned to the tent, to wait until their horses should be brought. In the mean time flasks of wine were handed round, and they quaffed in company with a number of cavaliers, amongst whom was Bayard. When the latter had drained his goblet, he requested Fieramosca to show him the list of combatants. Hector drew it from his bosom, and presented it to him. Upon this all crowded round Bayard, who read aloud the following names:

“ Charles de Torgues. Marc de Frignes. Giraut de Forses. Martellin de Lambris. Pierre de Liaye. Jacques de La Fontaine. Eliot de Baraut. Jean de Landes. Sacet de Jacet. Guy de La Mothe. Jacques de Guignes. Naute de La Fraise. Claude Grajan d’Asti.”

“ Claudio Grajano d’Asti ! ” exclaimed Fieramosca, staring at him with amazement.

“ Yes, Claudio Grajano d’Asti,” replied that personage. “ Do you think that I am not as tall and stout as any of the others ? ”

"But, tell me, Sir Claudio, do you know why this combat is about to be fought?"

"Why—what—am I deaf?—To be sure I know."

"You know, then, that the Italians are charged by the French with being cowards and traitors, and that is the cause of this challenge. Now tell me of what country are you?"

"Of Asti."

"And is not Asti in Piedmont? And pray, is Piedmont in Italy or in France? And you, an Italian soldier, will you fight with the French against the honour of the Italians?"

Fieramosca's eyes flashed fire whilst he spoke these words. He would have used more energetic ones, had he not recollected his vow, which prevented his using arms against that man. Grajano, on the contrary, who was a thousand miles away from Fieramosca's thoughts, at first could not comprehend the object of these interrogatories: he scarcely understood, when they were finished. He thought them excessively stupid; and, without deigning to give a direct and rational answer, he turned to his companions, and with a laugh said, "Oh! do you hear all this? One would say that this was the first time in his life that he has handled a lance! A fig for the Italians and Italy, and their well-wishers! I serve him who pays me. Do you not know, my handsome youth, that, with us soldiers, where our bread is there is our country?"

"My name is not *handsome youth*, but Hector Fieramosca," answered the latter, unable any longer to contain himself; "and I know nothing of these

base, cowardly things that you are saying. And if it were not that—" Here he almost involuntarily placed his hand on his sword, but immediately drew it back, and went on speaking with that contracted expression which a man has when obliged to gulp down a bitter mouthful. "There is but one thing, by Jove, that I cannot suffer: that these noble gentlemen, and you, sir Bayard, the first man of our profession, the most loyal and brave, should hear an Italian utter such pitiful sentiments respecting his country. But who does not know that in every country there are traitors?"

"You are the traitor!" thundered out the Piedmontese. Both instantly laid hands on their swords, and had almost drawn them before the bystanders could rush between and separate them, and remind them that ambassadors could neither offend nor defend. The noise and tumult were great, but the voice of Bayard, heard above the others, restored order and silence, and Graiano was dragged away by force. Fieramosca drove back his sword into the scabbard, striking his hand on the hilt to shut it in close. He then addressed himself to Bayard, apologizing for what had happened. Bayard rested both hands on Fieramosca's shoulders, and regarded him with a fixed gaze, that made the young man absolutely blush and cast down his eyes. Having stood thus for a short time, he impressed a kiss on his forehead, and said, "*Benoiste soit la femme qui vous porta!*"

An hour after, the drawbridge at the gate of Barletta was lowered for the entrance of Hector and Brancalone on their return.

CHAPTER VII.

THE morning of the day that had been spent by the Italians in their preparations for conveying the challenge, was not idly wasted by the two guests who had occupied the upper chambers at the hostelry of the Sun during the preceding night. Their names were unknown to every one except Captain Boscherino, but they are no secret to our readers. They were Cæsar Borgia, duke of Valentinois, and Don Michael da Corrella, one of his military attendants.

To compare certain villains with wild beasts, the most ferocious and the most destructive of living creatures, would be a feeble image. The latter operate by instinct, and instinct has certain limits; but what limit can we assign to a depraved heart, guided by advice of diabolical cunning, furnished with power, assisted by bravery, (for it is but too true that all villains are not cowards,) and supplied with immense riches? The son of Alexander the Sixth, the terror of Italy, and of all in that country who possessed wealth, rank, or beautiful female relatives, was here almost alone, in a humble habitation, surrounded by numbers who would willingly have purchased, at the expense of life, the pleasure of wreaking just vengeance on him. Those who are not aware of the extent of confidence and security that can exist in a mind of brave temperament, united with a cold, calculating judgment, may call this confidence rashness. But the Duke knew his situation well; and balancing the danger incurred against the profit he hoped to

gain by his visit to Barletta, he found all the probabilities in his favour. He was urged to this expedition by two causes. One was the desire to find out Ginevra, who, for many reasons, he supposed to be with Fieramosca; and if we cannot imagine such a man to be more attached to her than to any other woman, we may at least be certain that he had been much stung at having been overmatched. The other was a state reason; and to give our readers a clear notion of it, we must call their attention a little to the dark political atmosphere of that time.

The power of the House of Borgia, originating in the elevation of Cardinal Rodrigo Lenzuoli to the Popedom, had been increased by means of warfare, both spiritual and temporal, frauds, relationships, and alliance with France, to such a degree that every Italian prince and republic lived in constant suspicion respecting it. Cæsar Borgia, at first a cardinal, ill content with the scarlet robe, determined to enjoy alone the inheritance of his father, and to gather for himself alone the fruit of the family crimes. His brother, the Duke of Candia, standard-bearer of the Holy Church, and to whom the Pope had determined to give one of the Italian states, was the only obstacle to this ambition. A dagger-blow, paid for by the cardinal, or, according to some accounts, struck by his own hand, soon removed this obstacle. A poor man, who was taking care of some boats at one of the small quays, saw three men come to the river side one night. One on horseback was the cardinal: the corpse of his brother was placed across the horse behind him, and was supported by the other two men, one at the head and the other at the feet. They flung

the body into the Tiber, washed the crupper of the horse, which seemed matted with blood, and disappeared down a dark alley.

A month afterwards, the Duke of Valentinois, having laid aside his cardinal's robes, was mounted and at the head of an army. Using sometimes force and sometimes treachery, he very soon occupied Faenza, Cesena, Forli, Romagna, and part of the Marca, Camerino and Urbino. But his mode of acquiring, and his arts in maintaining, possession of this ill-gotten state, and the numberless injuries against individuals, inflamed against the Duke an universal and utter hatred, that only waited for an occasion to burst forth with fury. This opportunity might arise in two ways; either by the death of his father, or by his losing the aid of France. The Pope's advanced age, and the ever fluctuating fortune of the French arms, admonished him to provide himself with other support, should these fail him. His eye, opening out before it every intrigue, and searching deeply into the recesses of every hidden intention, plainly saw into the actual condition of Italy. He was well acquainted with the impetuous character of French valour, suited rather to obtain victory in a day's battle than to sustain the difficulties and annoyances of a prolonged and arduous war. He contemplated the ultimate success of Gonsalvo alone in humbling their power. He saw this one man, by his bravery, his skill, and his terrible obstinacy, almost on the point of turning the fortune of the Lilies. It seemed, therefore, advisable to hold some communication with him, and thus open the door to further treaties, in case of his ancient allies succumbing. An intrigue of such nicety,

and which would have undone him had an idea of it occurred to the French, could not be intrusted to the fidelity of any one. On this account he had departed secretly from Sinigalia, and come himself to Barletta.

It still wanted an hour to daybreak, when Valentino, who had one of those iron constitutions which seem scarcely to require repose, got up and called Don Michael, who was standing in readiness that he might not be too late; and giving a letter into his hands, he said, "Take this to Gonsalvo: he will give you a passport. If he should inquire for me, I am *not* in Barletta, but am near at hand. Last night I heard, from those soldiers who were guttling in the room below, the whole affair of Ginevra. I am certain now that Fieramosca has her with him, or not far off; and have reason to suppose she is in some place approached by the sea. Before evening I wish to know where she is. Find out Fieramosca, and take care that they do not escape from me."

Don Michael received both the letter and his master's commands without uttering a syllable. He returned to his chamber, dressed himself, and the morning was not much advanced when he put on his hat and set out for the citadel.

Whilst Don Michael proceeded on his way, the Duke placed himself at a window and followed him with a malicious eye, his visage at the same time wearing an expression of anticipated misfortune or treachery. And yet amongst the many villains whom he had in his service, (and he *had* some noted ones,) none could be said to be more completely the soul of every enterprise than Don Michael; and if such a thing as fidelity could exist in such a being, certain it was that he had

given proof of it to his master upon occasion of last importance. But, for the very reason that he was under great obligations to him, and could not be sure to get rid of him, without, as it were, cutting off his right hand, Cæsar Borgia hated him. The origin was little known : most people said he had come from Navarre ; and respecting the circumstances which had brought him into the Duke's service, there was a related an extraordinary case of revenge which he had executed on his own brother, in the details of which we shall briefly describe.

Don Michael had a youthful and lovely wife, and a younger brother, a bachelor, lived in his house. The beauty of his sister-in-law had such an effect on this youth, that, abandoning all regard to honour or the consequences, he used every means to seduce her, and succeeded. But he did not succeed in his design as to prevent the plot being discovered by a maid, who informed the husband. The latter immediately placed himself in ambush, surprised them. With his poniard, he attempted to murder them both at the same time ; but it chanced that they escaped from his hands with some slight wounds. So exacting was he at the wrong received, that he endeavoured to trace his brother, who, with the lady, fled to a place of security, and determined to kill him at all costs. But the brother having heard of the oath of the injured husband, managed to defend himself in different ways, so as to set at nought the other's designs ; and the offended man, entirely despairing of being able to inflict his vengeance by the excess of passion, carried almost to the

In the mean time the jubilee of the year 1

curred; and in the town where Don Michael resided there were abundance of processions, and penitences, and public preachings, by means of which several party disputes were made up, and families and individuals pacified; and amongst the rest Don Michael also seemed resolved to lay aside all rancorous feelings, and devote himself to holy things. But the brother would not suffer himself to be persuaded to an interview, spite of the numerous kindly and sacred protestations that came from the other side. At the end of a holy year, employed by Don Michael in continual penances and religious pursuits, he determined to abandon the world entirely; and going to a monastery of Scalzi,* entered into his noviciate; and that being completed, pronounced the solemn vows. Sent by his superiors into various parts of Spain, and even as far as Rome, in order to study theology, he became very learned; and on his return to his country with the reputation of being a particularly holy man, the rank of priesthood was conferred on him. He went through the first mass with the usual pomp, amidst a crowd of relations and friends, and other people. After its conclusion, returning into the sacristy, he seated himself, (such is the custom,) with his priest's cope still on his back, upon a stool, which his friends and relations approached one after another, in order to kiss his hand, and give him the congratulatory embraces. He had been repeatedly heard to deplore the hatred he had so many years nourished against his brother, and frequently to say that the only desire in the world which he now had, was not only to obtain oblivion and forgiveness for

* Order of barefooted Friars.

the past, but likewise, as a servant of God, to be the first and the humblest in offering it. Upon this solemn occasion, moved by the entreaties of all his relations, the brother at last resolved to go with the others. As he advanced, he began a humble address, whilst the priest, extending his arms, pressed him to his bosom; but instead of the brother again raising his head, his knees were seen to fail, and he sunk on the ground with a dreadful groan; and the priest, brandishing a small dagger, which in that embrace he had plunged into his brother's heart, kissed the still reeking blade, spurned the corpse with his foot, and then exclaimed, "I have caught thee at last!" The wretch escaped; and such was the confusion and amazement of the bystanders, that no efforts were made to detain him. For this crime he was banished, under pain of death if found. He fled from country to country, until he took refuge in Rome, where he was protected by the Duke of Valentinois. The latter took but little trouble to find out his virtues, but soon found him of use in most important affairs; and the villanous priest soon became the life of all his undertakings.

When Don Michael arrived at the gate of the castle, and the guard inquired whom he wished to see, he showed a small trunk, which he carried under his arm, at the same time saying that he had just come from the East; that he wished for an interview with Gonsalvo, to offer him several exceedingly rare things, universal remedies, talismans against witchcraft, with sundry other ingenious inventions. One of the guards, after eyeing him closely, beckoned to him to follow.

They entered a spacious court-yard, inclosed by lofty and ancient buildings. The chambers of each floor had outlets on to open galleries looking into the court: these galleries were supported by columns of grey granite, upon which rested arches, in one part Saxon and in another Gothic, according to the æras in which they had been erected. A number of round towers, crowned with pointed battlements, built with stone of a reddish hue, rose at unequal distances and to a considerable height above the roofs. On the summit of the tallest, called the Clock Tower, waved the grand standard of Spain, *or and gules*.

They ascended to the first floor by an open flight of steps, and came on a wide parapet, along which were placed in a row several figures of lions, roughly sculptured in stone: they then arrived in an antechamber, where Don Michael was left by his guide, who said, "When the Great Captain comes out, you will be able to speak to him."

"And, please you, when will he come out?"

"When he feels inclined," answered the soldier roughly, and went away to attend to his own concerns.

Don Michael was well aware that Patience is the goddess of antechambers, and therefore made no rejoinder: but perceiving at the further extremity of the room a knot of gentlemen collected round one of the large windows looking towards the sea, he kept his eye upon them, but pretended to be engaged in examining the old pictures with which the walls were covered; and in this manner, sidling along by degrees, he contrived to approach them very naturally: "Who

knows," thought he, "but that I may make some use of these gentry!" At last he dexterously seized an opportunity of putting in a word, aptly suited to their conversation, and after a few moments was established as one of the party. That fortune which honest men so often invoke without success served him even better than he expected. Observing with quiet cunning the circle of gentlemen, one of them particularly attracted his notice. This was a tall spare man, with one shoulder slightly out of symmetry, who was girded with a great long sword that stuck out from behind his gaberdine, and threatened the shins of his neighbours as he bent, and bowed, and scraped, and acted the affable and familiar with every one, but more especially with those of the greatest consequence. His arched eyebrows, elevated almost to the middle of his forehead, and his round, grey, staring eyes, gave to his face an expression of inquisitiveness, united with simple good-humour; and the latter quality appeared still more conspicuous from a perpetual smile of complacency which accompanied every word he uttered. This good man was Don Litterio Defastidiis, mayor of Barletta, the most inquisitive, the most vain, the most wearisome man in the world.

Don Michael, who was a little of a physiognomist, soon ascertained that he had met with the very man to suit his purpose. He approached him, and in a courteous and frank manner, which he could adopt at pleasure, entered into conversation with him. The mayor never finished a speech without a regular piece of pleasantry for a conclusion (of a species certainly known to our readers, if they have ever

spent half an hour in the afternoon at any village-apothecary's shop in the kingdom): but more than this, he always required that it should be laughed at. Don Michael, of course, almost split his sides with laughter, and exclaimed, "I really never met with such a pleasant fellow!" And to one thing, "Oh! capital!" and to another, "The best thing ever said!" and in less than half an hour they were great friends.

After a time, Prospero Colonna, who had been with Gonsalvo and obtained safeconduct for the challenge, came out and passed through the hall, and all there made very respectful bows to him. Don Michael inquired who he was, and was answered by Don Litterio, who very innocently went on telling him of the challenge, and of what was said at the supper, and of Fieramosca and his loves: Don Michael found that he was about to succeed beyond all his hopes, and said in a tone of interest, "This young man,—what do you call him?"

"Fieramosca."

"Well, is this Fieramosca a friend of yours, that you seem so much interested in him?"

"Oh yes, a very great friend of mine: and Signor Prospero is much attached to him; and indeed every one is, he is such a brave fellow. We see him every evening, either at the house of the Colonnas or in the square. A pity he has such an ugly blemish. He never laughs, never, d'ye know. Always with such a miserable look that it makes your heart ache. Ha! it is some time since I guessed the cause, but could hardly believe it. These brave soldiers are curiosities: it seems to them a disgrace to be in love! but,

in short, yesterday evening, one of the Frenchmen, who knew him in Rome, published it there is no longer any doubt. The proverb says truly, "Love and coughs cannot be concealed*.

The witticism of the mayor was received by Michael with the usual burst of laughter, and time it had to be repeated two or three times, it pleased Don Litterio so many times to repeat the stale proverb. On the conclusion of the joke, and its consequences, the former went on to say, "that love, if I could only see it, I would undertake to cure it so that it would not ever be remembered. But—"

Here came a pause, to allow time for entreaty on the part of Don Litterio.

"Cure it?" said the magistrate, "how would you cure it? For that sort of fever, something different from physicians and apothecaries is required."

"And I repeat, that if I could only procure a friend to help me, I'd be content to lose my health. I do not speak the truth."

Don Litterio looked at him a moment to see whether he were in joke or in earnest, and then he knelt to manage, so that the investigation should have a favourable conclusion. The mayor was more than half convinced, and said, "If that is all you require, you should not fail for want of it;" and he committed himself to have the credit of the successful cure, as he had boasted before of first discovery.

* I have given a free translation instead of a literal one of this proverb, which in the original might not please every

"Amore tosse e scabbia
Non la mostra chi uon abbia."

the disease. It was certain that any one who would work the miracle of changing Fieramosca into a boon-companion and jolly fellow, would be exalted to the skies by all his friends and acquaintances. He accordingly teased Don Michael to let him know how such a difficult matter could be executed; but the other stood on his guard, requiring a host of entreaties, as if he had not made up his mind to let out this piece of confidence. At length, seemingly having overcome his scruples, he said, that in Turkey he had seen and learned to use a wonderful charm for destroying the most furious passion; and he had not much trouble in mastering his companion's brain, by means of this whim of the poor magistrate, who esteemed it high luck to have met with such a clever personage.

At last Don Michael said, "Everything depends upon my obtaining an interview of five minutes with the young lady; for the rest, leave it all to me."

"Why truly, I cannot at this moment exactly promise you that; for, to tell you the truth, I am not acquainted with her. But if she is in Barletta, or within ten miles of it, depend upon it, before twenty-four hours have passed I will make myself acquainted with all necessary information. I will go and find Giuliano, he is a servant of the corporation, the town-crier, a devil of a fellow for knowing everything."

"And where shall I see you?" inquired Don Michael.

"Wherever is most convenient."

"If you think proper, we will meet at the tavern of the Sun, about twenty-two o'clock*."

* Two hours before night: see Note p. 8.

"Then it is all settled," replied Don Litterio leaving Don Michael astonished at his good-fortune. He proceeded to the town-hall to find Giuliano. For our reader's permission, we will not accompany as Don Michael might become rather annoying this interminable staying in the antechamber.

He waited uselessly some time for Gonsalvo's appearance ; and in the end persuaded the usher of the chamber to introduce him into the presence of the duke.

The great Spanish commander stood erect before the window, wrapped in a mantle of crimson satin, with grey miniver. The noble mien, the lofty brow, the scrutinizing glance, and above all the great reputation of this celebrated man, awakened in the heart of the Duke's *employé* that feeling of fear, I mean almost say of terror, which invariably seizes upon a villain when in the presence of a virtuous character. He bowed with profound humility, and said, "Your noble lord, the importance of the message which I have brought to Your Excellency has compelled me to present myself under a name that does not belong to me. In this I have committed an offence, I respectfully beg to treat your lordship's pardon ; but, as will soon be known to you, secrecy was only too necessary in the case of the man who sends me to you can only trust for its preservation to your noble faith and honour."

Gonsalvo briefly replied, that no one who had placed confidence in him would be deceived, and required no further explanations. Don Michael then delivered the Duke's letter, procured a passport, and returned to his master. His master assured him that the secret of his mission in Barletta would be kept inviolate by Gonsalvo.

He added too, that he expected much from the research of his new friend the mayor, upon which Valentinois, quite satisfied with the course which affairs were taking, slouched his hat over his eyes, and enveloped in his cloak left the hostelry. He then went by water to the back part of the citadel, where a man had been sent to wait for him, according to agreement between Gonsalvo and Don Michael. He was admitted through a small door, up a secret staircase, and along several dark passages, and was at length ushered into the chamber of the great Spanish captain.

It is unnecessary to give a minute account of the conference that followed. In short, Valentinois gave a wonderfully clear and accurate exposition or summary of Italian affairs, of the forces, the hopes and fears of the different states. He hinted that it would gratify him to be able to form a secret alliance with Spain, and gave as a reason that he was drawn to it by a desire for the good of his people, and to put an end to any miseries they might suffer should the Spaniards remain conquerors. He succeeded by his apparently frank manner, which he knew well how to assume, in making a more favourable impression than his previous fame had warranted. He proposed a secret treaty, into which the Pope was to enter, as also the Venetians, if found to be so disposed; by which they should pledge themselves to give each other aid in their mutual interests, and which was not to be made public until the Spaniards should have made themselves masters of two thirds of the kingdom. He proposed to reduce Tuscany with his own army, showing that the principal friends of France in

Italy were the Florentines, and that therefore it was strongly advisable to weaken such a powerful ally. He added, that it would also be productive of advantage to admit the Pisans into the confederacy, helping them to recover the losses they had sustained by the republic of Florence; against which, if they should be rendered strong enough, they would form an efficient check.

Gonsalvo had no violent objection to any of these proposals, and the subtle mind of Cæsar Borgia managed, with great perspicuity, to render those things most prominent which were for the most part true. But still the Spaniard was perfectly aware of the man he was dealing with, and could not bring himself to confide in him: he therefore declined at that time giving a precise answer, saying that he was desirous of conferring with his privy councillors before communicating his decided resolution. He was neither sparing of fair words nor courteous manners towards Valentinois; he conducted him to a suite of rooms on the ground-floor looking to the sea, desiring him to consider them at his entire service during the time he should be pleased to remain in Barletta; and he appointed some of his most trustworthy attendants to wait upon him, with all the honours due to the son of a Pope.

Towards evening Fieramosca and Brancaloneo arrived at the gate of the town, on their return from the French camp. No sooner were they admitted, than a crowd of officers, men-at-arms, and soldiers collected round them, which was increased by as many as they met in the streets; every one was anxious to be the first to hear the reply of the French,

"How has it gone off? What answer have they given? Who is to fight?—when?—where?" But the two friends, laughing at all this fury of inquisitiveness, said, "Come to the citadel and you shall hear." They went to the citadel, and were introduced to Gonsalvo, when Fieramosca delivered to him the letter from the Duke of Nemours, which Gonsalvo read aloud. It accepted the challenge, but refused granting free lists to the combatants. This refusal seemed rather strange to all present, and the Great Captain immediately said, "I should not have expected that the French would seek for subterfuges in order to avoid this combat. But you shall have free lists: you have my word for it." He then called one of his secretaries. "Write to the Duke of Nemours," said he, "and say that he will be satisfied to hear that the obstacle is removed,—that I offer him a truce until after the day of the combat: you may add, that in two days I expect the arrival of my daughter, Donna Elvira, upon which occasion I intend to give some sort of a *fête*; if he should feel inclined, during the interval of peace, to come and enjoy it with us, it will be the cause of rendering it still more joyful."

Between the writing and despatching this letter and the receipt of an answer scarcely two hours elapsed. The Duke of Nemours accepted both the invitation and the truce. The latter was proclaimed through the town that same evening, by sound of trumpet, together with the names of the selected combatants for Italy, to which three had since been added, to make up the number desired by the French: these

were, Ludovico Aminale, of Terni ; Mariano, of Sarni ; Giovanni Capoccio, a Roman.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE convent on the island situated between Mount Gargano and Barletta was dedicated to St. Ursula. Its walls now present to the view nothing more than a heap of ruins, covered with brambles and ivy ; but at the date of our story they were in good condition, and formed an edifice of a stern aspect, which owed its foundation to the tardy penitence of a Princess of the House of Anjou, who came there to close in holiness a life spent amidst the licentiousness of pleasure and ambition. One could not desire a place more fitted for sweet and tranquil solitude than this.

On the summit of a rock, perhaps sixty feet above the level of the sea, is a piece of fertile land about five hundred yards in circumference. In the corner nearest the main-land rises a church : this is entered by a fine portico supported by noble columns of grey granite. The interior, divided into three aisles, with narrow pointed arches resting on clusters of slender pillars ornamented with fretwork, receives its light through long Gothic windows of painted glass, representing in glowing colours the history of the saint's miracles. Behind the principal altar is a tribune of a circular shape, adorned with mosaic work on a gold

ground. There may be seen a Jehovah in his glory, and at his feet St. Ursula, with the eleven thousand virgins, borne by angels. This church, far from worldly habitations, was generally empty. The nuns alone assembled there in choir at appointed hours, by day and night, to chaunt the services.

It was evening, and the nuns were singing behind the great altar the vesper hymn, with its prolonged and rather monotonous chaunt, when a female was seen in a kneeling posture, praying by the side of a tomb of white marble, discoloured by age and covered by a canopy likewise of marble, ornamented with carved foliage and animals in the Gothic style, in which reposed the bones of the founder of the convent. This lady, covered even down to the ground with a veil as white as the marble, pale, motionless, in her devotion, would have seemed a statue in the attitude of prayer, placed there by a sculptor, had not two long tresses of auburn hair peeped out from beneath her veil, and had not her eyelids been occasionally raised, allowing the brilliancy of her eyes to be discovered, in which might be perceived an expression of the most holy fervour.

Poor Ginevra (it was she) had indeed reason to pray, since she found herself in a situation where a woman's fortitude alone is seldom sufficient to render her victorious over herself. She repented, but too late, of the determination she had taken to accompany Fieramosca; she repented of having in any manner united her fortunes with those of a man whom prudence and duty would have counselled her to avoid more than any other; she repented of having remained so long without obtaining intelligence as to

whether her husband were living or dead. Reason told her, 'That which has not been done may still be done;' but a voice from her heart whispered, 'It is too late!' and this *it is too late* sounded like an irrevocable decree. Her days became tedious, anxious, bitter; and she felt deprived of all hope of being able to free herself from her troubles, save by yielding to one or other of the powers that carried on a conflict within her. Her constitution was daily becoming weaker, oppressed as she was by the weight of this struggle.

The morning hours, and even mid-day, were endurable. She occupied herself with embroidery; she had books, and the garden of the convent to walk in. But the evening!—the most gloomy thoughts, the most troublesome cares, appeared, like those insects which swarm and become more annoying at sunset, to wait for that hour to assail her mind with united force. Ginevra would then fly for refuge to the church: there, if she found not joy or peace, she experienced at least some brief moments of consolation.

Her prayer, fervid though it might be, was short, and seldom varied. "Holy Virgin!" would she say, "grant that I may no longer desire to love him." And sometimes she would add, "Grant that I may firmly resolve to seek Grajano, and desire to find him!" But her heart often failed her in offering up this second prayer: from the continual repetition of the words, she frequently found herself thinking of Fieramosca at the very moment when she was praying to be enabled to forget him. Then she would sigh and weep; but she perceived too well which desire was the stronger in her bosom,

Nevertheless, on that day, by one of those fits to which our nature is liable, she seemed to have resolved within herself to take the right course. The idea of sickness, which her failing health rendered probable, and at no distant time,—the idea of death, and the terrors of a conscience not pure,—came upon her in a moment of hesitation, turned the balance, and caused her to determine upon obtaining information respecting Grajano, and, on discovering where he was, returning to him in whatever manner and at whatever cost. If Fieramosca himself had been present at that instant, she would have declared her resolution to him, without doubting for a moment; “But,” said she, rising to go out of the church, “this evening he will come, and he shall know all.”

The nuns, having concluded the vespers, silently left the church through a wicket leading into the cloisters, and returned to their cells. Ginevra went out after them. She entered a sort of terrace, kept as clean as a mirror, surrounding a small garden. In the centre was a well, with a roof supported by four stone pillars. From this, passing through a long garden-walk, she came out into a back court-yard, which was terminated by a small cottage, without any inclosure, and separated from the other buildings. This was the residence set apart for strangers. Ginevra lived there with the young female whose life had been saved by Fieramosca; and they occupied two or three apartments, which, as usual in convents, did not communicate with each other, except by a common entrance.

Ginevra, on going into the chamber where they were accustomed to pass the greater part of the day

together, found Zoraide busy before a tambour-frame, accompanying her work with an Arabic song, full of those melancholy minor passages so common in the music of the Southern nations. She gave a momentary glance at the embroidery, (it was a mantle of blue satin worked with silver, a joint manufacture, and destined for Fieramosca,) then sighed deeply, and afterwards seated herself in a vine-shaded balcony commanding a view of Barletta. The descending sun was then hidden behind the Puglian hills; a few streaks of clouds, lighted up by the solar blaze, extended upwards through the sky, like golden fish swimming in a sea of fire. Their image was reflected in lengthened and brilliant beams upon the waves, set off here and there by the snowy sails of some fishing-boats which the eastern breeze was wafting towards the land. The gaze of the unhappy lady was directed towards the pier of the harbour opposite to her, from which a small boat was soon seen to launch, and then take its course towards the island.

On this day she was more than ever longing for its approach. It appeared that it must bring her to some decision; and whatever that might be, in her miserable state it must be a gain. But those moments of expectation, how long, how bitter were they! She would have had Hector then present; she wished that he had already heard from her lips those words so difficult to utter. If he delayed, or if he should not come, would she the next day have strength enough for her purpose?

A dark speck, which scarcely seemed to change its position, by degrees was seen moving on the sea, close along by the shore. A quarter of an hour passed: it

had come nearer, it had grown larger; and although one still could hardly distinguish that it was a boat rowed by one man, Ginevra recognised him, and felt a dreadful pang at her heart. By a sudden revulsion in her ideas, it seemed at once impossible to her to tell him what she had one instant before—or thought she had—irrevocably fixed. With joy would she have seen that little barque turn back; but in place of that, forward—forward it comes: it is already near the shore,—already are heard the plunge and dash of the oars.

“Zoraide, he’s here!” said she, turning towards her companion, who, scarcely raising her countenance, bowed a reply, and soon let her eyes fall again upon her embroidery. Ginevra descended, and walked towards the place where boats approached the island; and descending a flight of steps hewn out of the rock, arrived at the water’s edge at the very time when Fieramosca was laying down his oars, and the boat touched the land.

But if the lady wanted courage to declare her determination, Fieramosca, who, on his side, had affairs equally serious to disclose, felt himself equally incapable of the task. Separated for a considerable time past by some distance from the territories in which Grajano and his troops were fighting, he had not for a long time heard any news of him. Some soldiers who had come out of Romagna, either badly informed, or from some mistake in the name, had affirmed that he had been killed in the war. The putting faith in their assertion suited his case but too well, so that he had not much difficulty in crediting them, and gave himself little trouble in trying to as-

certain the truth of the matter. It rarely happens that, where there is a fear of our discovering something to our loss, we desire to see clearly; and, in this way, neglecting to obtain correct information, Fieramosca had gone on delaying up to that day, when his own eyes had at last undeceived him. He returned to Barletta overwhelmed with conflicting emotions, and in complete doubt as to whether or not he should tell it to Ginevra. If he should, it would be equivalent to an everlasting separation from her; and yet it appeared culpable not to do so: and then, how could he succeed in hiding anything from her who was accustomed to read all his thoughts?

In this state of doubt he arrived at the island, and had not come to a decision when he was met by Ginevra. Constrained by the circumstances to determine upon the *yes* or the *no*, he adopted the latter, with this proviso, muttered to himself, "We will consider about it afterwards."

"I have come rather late this evening," said he, ascending the steps, "but we have been occupied with important affairs; and I have grand news for you."

"News!" replied Ginevra,—"*good or bad?*"

"Good: and, with God's help, some day or other it will be still better."

They here reached the esplanade before the church. At the very edge of the rock, where the latter falls perpendicularly into the sea, a low wall was erected for safety. There was a group of cypresses not far off, and in the midst of them a wooden cross, round which were several rustic seats. They both reclined on these, in the silvery moonlight which had just

overcome the purple twilight, and Fieramosca continued: "Rejoice, my Ginevra! this has been a glorious day for Italy and for us; and if Providence assist a righteous cause, it will be the commencement of greater glory. But some fortitude is required from you on the occasion: today you have an opportunity of showing a bright example to the women of Italy."

"Speak!" answered the lady, looking earnestly at him, as if studying his countenance, to read there by anticipation what proof he expected from her; "I am a woman, but I am not faint-hearted."

"I know it, Ginevra; and I should doubt of tomorrow's sunrise rather than doubt you." He then narrated the whole affair of the challenge, explaining minutely the circumstances that gave rise to it; also the journey to the French camp, the return, the preparations for the combat; and how animated were his words, how kindled by his love of country and of glory, and how the presence of Ginevra made the flame burn more brightly in his bosom, those readers will best know who have felt their hearts beat more rapidly when speaking of acting nobly for their country to women capable of entering into their sentiments.

By degrees, as Hector proceeded in his discourse,—his energy, both in voice, words and action, continually increasing,—Ginevra's respiration became more frequent; her bosom, like a veil waving in a gentle breeze, rose and fell, swollen with impetuous and perhaps discordant emotions; but all worthy of her. Her eyes, apparently governed by the eloquent words of the young man, kindled, nay, flashed forth sparks. At last, with her fair and taper hand she

seized the hilt of Fieramosca's sword, and looking up courageously, she said, "If I had but an arm like yours—if I could wield this weapon, which I can scarcely lift—you should not go alone. No: and then, perhaps, I should not have to say, 'The Italians have conquered, but he is —'. Ah! I know it, I know it. You will never return defeated!" Here, overpowered by the idea of the coming danger, she was unable to restrain a flood of tears, some of which dropped on Fieramosca's hand.

"For whom are you weeping, Ginevra? You would not for the world wish that this combat should not take place?"

"Oh no, Hector! never, never: do not wrong me thus." And wiping away her tears, she earnestly continued, "I am not weeping,—see, it is over: it was only a moment's weakness." And then with a smile, rendered more beautiful from the crystal drops remaining on her eyelids, she added, "I was far too brave in talking of swords and battles, and now I have exposed myself; but I deserve it."

"Women of your character can work wonders with weapons, without touching them. You might revolutionize the world, but that you know not how to act. I speak not this of you, but of the Italian women who resemble you too little."

This sentence was heard by Zoraide, who had just joined them, with a little basket of fruit and cake, and other refreshments: this was suspended from her left arm, and in her right hand she carried a flask of white wine. Her dress was in the European costume; but one might perceive, in her selection of the brightest colours, and fantastical disposition of her garments,

the taste of those still barbarous countries to which she owed her origin. Her head, after the Eastern fashion, was attired in a twisted shawl, with the ends hanging down over her bosom. She had the lofty and arched eyebrow, the aquiline nose, and that brown and (if I may dare to say it) yellowish complexion, forming the peculiar characteristics of the races residing near the Caucasus. In her affectionate moods she would sometimes dart forth glances almost partaking of the savage character. She was very simple and frank, and unincumbered with notions of etiquette. She stood awhile looking at Hector and Ginevra, and then, in the Italian language certainly, but with a strong foreign accent, said, "You were speaking of women, Hector : let me too hear what it was."

"Women, and something else," replied Ginevra : "we were talking of a species of dance, in which we ladies would cut but a poor figure."

These ambiguous words only doubled Zoraide's curiosity, so Hector told her the substance of what he had just related to Ginevra. The Eastern maid stood wrapt in thought for a moment, and then shaking her head, she said, "I cannot comprehend you. So much wrath, such an uproar, because the French say that they esteem you but little ! Why, have they not oftentimes told you the same thing, and rendered it more clear by their actions, by descending upon your country, devouring your harvests, and driving you from your own roofs ? Do not the Spaniards, equally with the French, tell you the same thing, when they do the same things as the French ? The deer

drives not the lion from his den, but the lion the deer, and devours it."

"Zoraide, we are here not amongst barbarous tribes, where force alone decides everything. It would occupy me too long to explain to you the claims of the French crown to this kingdom: I need only tell you that it is a feud under the Holy Church. That signifies that the Holy Church is patron; and, as patron, conferred the investiture of it on Charles Duke of Provence, about two centuries ago, and it has come by hereditary descent to His present Most Christian Majesty."

"Very well; and who gave it to the Church?"

"A French warrior, called Robert Guiscard, who had made himself master of it by force of arms."

"I comprehend less than I did before. That book which Ginevra gave me, and which you know I have read all through attentively, is it not written by Issa-ben-Jusuf?"

"Yes."

"Does it not say, then, that all men are made in the image of God, and purchased by his blood? I can understand that there may be some Christians who, abusing the power given them, may make themselves masters of the property and lives of their brethren; but how this abuse can possibly become a right, and descend from son to son, I cannot understand."

"It is difficult to say," answered Hector, smiling, "whether you do not understand at all, or understand too well. But, without this right, what would become of Popes, Emperors, and Kings? and without them, how would the world go on?"

Zoraide shrugged her shoulders, and was silent. She then, from the contents of her basket, prepared a sort of collation on one of the benches near, covering this substitute for a table with a perfumed napkin. "Aye, that's well," said Hector, wishing to remove the sad thoughts which he could not avoid reading on Ginevra's countenance; "let us amuse ourselves whilst we have the opportunity, and let the world go on as it lists."

Upon this they cheerfully commenced their attack upon the refreshments. "There is an old saying," continued Fieramosca,—"'Talk not of the dead when you are at table;' we will therefore quit the subject of the challenge, and speak of something pleasant, and then we shall soon be merry. The noble Gonsalvo has proclaimed a joust, a bull-fight and plays, and balls and suppers; Barletta will be a perfect Cockayne."

"Do you say so?—and the French!" exclaimed Ginevra.

"The French are coming too. A truce has been offered them, and they will not be such boors as to refuse it. The festivities are to be in honour of the arrival of Donna Elvira, the daughter of the Great Captain; and loving her, as he does, like the apple of his eye, he is determined upon having grand rejoicings."

Here both the ladies commenced an almost endless fire of interrogatories, and Hector endeavoured to dispose of them as well as he could, addressing the answers first to one and then to the other. The following are a few specimens. The reader may guess the questions.

"Beautiful! yes, very beautiful; if one can depend on what folks say: a head of hair that seems made of spun gold."—"She is expected to arrive in a few days."—"She has been an invalid residing at Taranto, but has now recovered, and is returning to live with her father."—"Very fond of her! believe me, he has done more for her than he would ever have done for himself. There was that affair at Taranto; you may have heard that the Spanish troops once mutinied there on account of their pay being in arrear; and Inigo tells me that it was a miracle that Gonsalvo's life was saved on that occasion, for nearly all the men surrounded him with menaces and brandishing of pikes. There was one Yciar, a captain of infantry, who, on Gonsalvo's declaring that he positively had no money, cried out with brutal language that his daughter (excuse me, ladies,) might procure him some. The tumult was soon after appeased, and the night passed over quietly. The morning after, when people got up and went about their affairs, what do you think they saw in the square? Captain Yciar, hung up by the neck before his own windows! and those fellows who had thrust their lances within a very short distance of Gonsalvo's breast were not molested at all. Now you may have an idea whether he is fond of her."

Chatting on in this manner, it began to grow late. "I must really leave you now," said Fieramosca; and rising up, he sauntered down towards his boat, accompanied by the two ladies. Ginevra descended with him to the base of the rock, and Zoraide, who had remained above, was saluted by a wave of the hand by Fieramosca, on entering his little barque,

but she scarcely acknowledged it, and left the spot. Fieramosca carelessly said to Ginevra, "She did not perceive my sign, but you will salute her for me. And now, adieu ! in these times God knows when we can meet ; but enough : I will manage to do so somehow or other." He then pushed off, and using his oars, rowed away from the island. Ginevra again ascended the steps, and stood awhile on the summit of the rock, wrapt in thought, and listlessly watching the two lines diverging from the prow of the boat and lengthening over the water's wide surface. When she could see it no longer, she returned to the cottage, and closed and barred the door for the night.

CHAPTER IX.

FROM the earliest ages of the world, to the present time, birds have been caught by fowlers with almost the selfsame kinds of decoys, and men, in like manner, have always been caught in the same sort of nets. But the most dangerous enticement, perhaps, of all, is that which calls into play our *amour propre*. Don Michael was well aware of this, and having found out the magistrate's particular foibles, with a few masterly strokes, as we have seen, he had him safe in his hand. When Don Litterio left the ante-chamber of Gonsalvo to seek the town-crier, his brain was filled with a thousand fantastic ideas, and he could not contain his joy at meeting with a man

who promised to show him such great wonders. It is true, that occasionally a thought crossed him of his new acquaintance being a quack ; but, having an exalted opinion of his own discernment, he said to himself, (like most people who are liable to be made fools of,) " Ah, he cannot make a fool of *me* ! " They met each other, according to the appointment, at the tavern of the Sun. But he had nothing to tell Don Michael, since the servant, who, according to his belief, possessed such talent for research, had promised much, done very little, and discovered nothing at all.

That evening at supper, the mayor's wife and maid-servant perceived that there was something mysterious brewing inside of his cranium, and would barely allow him to eat a mouthful by their incessant questioning. It was a grand thing that he succeeded in preventing himself from blabbing the whole ; for to keep a secret, more particularly if the affair involved was at all likely to add to his consequence, was a more arduous task to him than for any one to restrain a cough that is constantly tickling the throat. " Aye, I know what—if you knew—if something turns out well—" After a few of these exclamations, he thought for a moment, began to be alarmed at the risk, jumped up from table, seized a candle pettishly, and went off to bed.

That night appeared a century to him. Day came at last : he dressed himself in haste, and rushing to the square, stationed himself in a barber's shop, where Don Michael had promised to come and seek him. He sat down on a bench in the shop, the daily resort of the notary, the physician, the apothecary, and two or three other personages, the big-wigs of

Barletta. He crossed one leg over the other, and began to wag it most industriously ; while resting his right elbow in the palm of his left hand, he drummed on his chin with his fingers, and peeped first in one direction and then in the other to watch for his friend's appearance, and then cast his eyes upwards, because he did not come. The apothecary, the notary, and others had more than once said "Good morning, Mr. Mayor !" but seeing that they made no impression, and that he barely noticed them, they kept at a respectful distance, speaking softly, and remarking, "What the deuce is the matter now ?" Don Litterio let them whisper on, and did not open his mouth. He was a man who had two faces at his command ; one cheerful and humble at the same time, for his superiors ; the other wrinkled and full of sharp angles, for his inferiors ;—an enviable talent which, as every one knows, is oftentimes bestowed by Heaven upon particularly great blockheads.

Having passed half an hour in this interesting employment, he heard some one behind him say, "Your Excellency ! Signor Mayor ! pray do not be offended ; if you will favour me by accepting a few—they are fresh gathered, with the dew still on them." He turned round and saw the gardener belonging to the convent of St. Ursula, Gennaro Rafamillo, who was in the act of offering him a tithe of a basketful of cherries, which he had brought, according to his daily custom, to sell in the square with other fruits : he knew from experience, that by means of this tribute he might afterwards dispose of his goods without troubling himself about the inspectors of the market.

"I have other things to think of besides your

cherries," answered Don Litterio; yet, after peeping into the basket, swelling out his cheeks, and then puffing out gently his collected breath, he deliberately and with a sort of noble disdain took out three or four vine-leaves, spread them on the bench in place of a dish, heaped up thereon a good large pyramid of cherries, and began an attack on them forthwith.

"Ah! Signor, are not they good? tell the truth: I carried some yesterday evening to the lady, and she told me she had never seen finer."

"And who may the lady be?"

"The lady Ginevra; she who lives in the stranger's cottage: they say she is a grand lady from Naples, and there is some one here in the service of Signor Prospero, either her husband or her brother, I know not which, that comes almost every day to visit her."

The gardener evidently intended to make a long oration, for brevity of speech was not his peculiar characteristic, but Don Michael in the mean time had come up and placed himself at the magistrate's back without the latter perceiving him.

"Well, Signor Mayor," said Don Michael, clapping the other on the shoulder, "it strikes me that this man may put us on the track; leave him to me." And without further ceremony he set to work to cross-question Gennaro, and quickly ascertained from his answers that this was the very Ginevra he was in search of. The clue once found, to such a man as Don Michael the rest was nothing at all. In order to gain admission into the convent, and be enabled to examine the localities so as to arrange the

means necessary for carrying off the lady, he saw that the magistrate would be a most useful assistant to him. It was, however, necessary to inspire him with such a feeling of confidence as should drive from his head every suspicion as to the rectitude of his intentions. He drew him aside, and said: "We had better discuss the matter a little. Wait for me at the hostelry of the Sun: in the mean time I will see if that fellow can point out to me the youth who visits Ginevra daily."

Don Litterio proceeded towards the hostelry, and his new friend, taking the gardener with him into a place where they were relieving guard, and there were a number of officers and soldiers, said, "Is he amongst these?" Gennaro looked about awhile, and then, seeing Fieramosca, replied, "That's he!" and Don Michael learned from one of the soldiers that he had found his man. In five minutes he was with the Mayor at the tavern, at that hour of the day quite deserted; and having seated themselves opposite each other at a small table, on which was a flask of Greek wine and a couple of glasses, Don Michael, making up an exceedingly modest face, began the conversation. "The discovery is complete: but before entering upon the subject, I wish to say a few words to you. Don Litterio, I have been in all quarters of the globe, and I pique myself upon my talent of finding out really sensible men at first sight. From the short acquaintance you and I have had, I cannot avoid inferring that there exists not in the world a sharper intellect than your own."

The magistrate acknowledged the compliment by a smile half humble and half complacent.

"No, no, it's of no use to—I only say what I think : you don't know me yet. If I had a contrary opinion, I should say it boldly, thus,—'Signor Mayor, excuse me, but you are a perfect simpleton;' and then if I were a quack, I should seek some one else. But as I pride myself on being an honest man with every one and at all times, so I have no fear of dealing with a man like you, who has his eyes open. I will now tell you everything, and you need not trust words alone; you shall have facts,—realities; and you will afterwards be obliged to acknowledge that you have had to deal with an honourable man."

He here began a long story of his former life, invented for the occasion: that he had formerly been a great sinner, (which was true,) and to obtain pardon made a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre: that a hermit on Mount Lebanon had at length absolved him, giving him this penance however to perform, that he was to wander over the world for the space of seven years, and that whenever he met with an opportunity of doing good, of whatever sort, he was to set to work to do it, even if it cost him his life, contenting himself with living in humility and poverty; that in so doing, he had employed for the benefit of his fellow-creatures the power and knowledge which he had acquired during his travels in Syria and Egypt.

"And now," continued he, "you will begin to comprehend the reason of my earnest wish to release your young friend from dangers which might cause the eternal damnation of his soul. The lady, it is plain, is that lady Ginevra of St. Ursula: it will be your part to procure me an introduction to her. It

is possible you may have suspicions that I am a profligate fellow, and you may not like to introduce a person of whose character you are ignorant; and perhaps you have reason on your side." (Don Litterio wriggled uneasily on his seat.) "No, I repeat, you have reason: no one is labelled on his forehead as an honest man; and, alas! there are but too many rascals in the world! But when I have shown you how, with the help of God, I have the power of extracting treasures from the bowels of the earth, restraining the fury of the musket-ball, and of doing a number of other almost impossible things, which you shall see me do, and how all the benefit will belong to you without my touching an atom of it, but contenting myself with a scanty subsistence, you will then say, 'That man might acquire riches, and live in the midst of luxuries; but instead of so doing, he lives in poverty and troubles: what he tells me, therefore, must be true; and he cannot assuredly be a bad man.' Two words more, and I have done. Many have thanked their stars that they have met with me; I might have it in my power to be serviceable also to you. Think of it, and come to a speedy resolution: the penance I have to complete compels me to traverse the globe without remaining more than a week in any one place."

This harangue, to which the Mayor had listened open-mouthed and scarcely breathing, had such an effect upon him, that he began to be ashamed of indulging any suspicious thoughts. Nevertheless, to keep up his character as a shrewd man, he replied, that after witnessing any of these proofs, he would willingly afford his aid. The matter was therefore

settled, and they separated on the understanding that Don Michael would see the Mayor again as soon as possible, and meanwhile would make use of his wonderful powers to ascertain if there was any hidden treasure in the neighbourhood of Barletta.

Having thus plied the magistrate, and seen that the deception was likely to succeed so well, he set himself about baiting the trap. He sought out Boschero, and told him that his aid was required for the service of the Duke. Boschero, at the name alone of Valentinois, trembled like a twig, and answered, not even knowing the affair in which his assistance was demanded, "I am quite ready." Don Michael, without at that time entering into any explanation, simply said: "Wait for me outside the gate which looks towards the shore, and leads to the bridge of St. Ursula." (The truce between the two armies, which had been accepted by the French commander, allowed the besieged the opportunity of scouring the surrounding country.) Boschero was punctual to the appointment, and his guide was not less so, for he soon overtook him, carrying a bundle under his arm.

If any one had wished to follow these two men, he might have tracked them along the shore for a mile beyond the bridge which connects the island with the mainland, thence seen them plunge in among the brambles and briars of a wild ravine, and enter the ruins of an ancient deserted church, which some years before had been used as a cemetery. But to avoid relating this journey twice over, we will wait until it is made again at night, and we hope that this economical arrangement will please the reader. V

therefore proceed to mention, that two hours before dark Don Michael made his appearance in the square, alone; and accosting the Mayor, who was in the barber's shop, whispered into his ear, "The place is found: tonight, when the clock strikes three*, I will be at your door, and don't keep me waiting."

At three o'clock precisely Don Michael was at his post. The Mayor came out, closed the door behind him carefully, so as to make no noise, and proceeding very softly and silently through a few dark streets and lanes, (there were no public lamps in those times,) they were soon outside of the town. On, on they went, and they heard four o'clock strike from the castle tower, the sound borne along by the wind in a deep stifled tone, just as they were passing St. Ursula: they then advanced along the sea-shore in the direction of the ruined church. They were now in a deserted sterile spot, overspread with dwarf brambles, continuing to increase in wildness. The path they were pursuing was soon lost in the sand, into which they sunk almost knee-deep; and here and there they met with the beds of dried-up torrents, full of gravel and pebbles. The two travellers were in very different states of mind at this time.

Don Michael, more accustomed to walking by night than by day, preceded his companion with a firm step. The other, who very likely had never been outside of the town after the *Ave Maria* twice during his life, was puffing and blowing from fatigue and want of breath, peeping cautiously round at every step, and cursing in his heart the moment in which he had been induced to leave his house:

* Three hours after sunset.

and, in truth, it turned out an unlucky moment to him. One thought and then another passed through his brain; and he began to be filled with a thousand fears, not the least of which was the finding himself alone, far from habitations and at night, with a man about whose character, after all, he was anything but certain. Still every now and then he would try to pluck up courage, and forthwith commence humming softly three or four notes,—he had not breath for the fifth:—but then he would fancy that he heard a strange noise amongst the underwood, or, when the fitful light of the moon occasionally glanced from behind the clouds, that he saw at a distance the figure of a man crouching down, which, on his coming up to it, generally proved the stump of a tree or a stone; and then again some strange sort of hobgoblin vision would rise up in his imagination, whereupon he began repeating a *Requiem* or *De profundis*.

Whilst he was indulging in this charming train of thought, they arrived in an open part of the wood, from the midst of which rose the ruined church. On its front were depicted several figures of skeletons, lanky and upright, with mitres and triple crowns on their heads, and holding in their bony fingers great wavy scrolls, on which were written such Latin sentences as the following: *Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur!*—*Miseremini mei!* &c.; and although it was not very easy to read them by the light of the moon, the elegant figures just mentioned were perfectly visible, and had truly by themselves a sufficient effect. Don Michael produced a lantern and approached the door: the magistrate had stopped a few paces behind, but having ascertained his com-

panion's designs, he uttered a "Here?" in such a melancholy, terrified tone, that it called a smile upon the compressed and colourless lips of Don Michael, who said "A little strength of mind is necessary, Signor Mayor, for in a situation like the present timidity is rarely productive of profit, and is sometimes the cause of disappointment and misfortune. He who is with you works in God's name, and to show you that it is in this manner alone that he subdues the spirits of the dead, we will commence by prayer."

Upon this he knelt down, and began running through the *Miserere* and *Dies illa*, while Don Litterio gave the responses, as well as he was able, adding thereto a vow, that if he returned from this expedition alive, he would light a candle every Saturday before St. Fosca, and fast during the Vigils of the Dead. On the conclusion of the prayers they arose: a door, half-rotten and barely supported by its rusty hinges, yielded, and indeed almost fell down, on receiving a push from Don Michael's foot; and they entered the ruin, scratching and tearing their legs with the brambles which almost filled up the doorway.

The pavement of the building was scattered over with the bones of the dead. In one corner a bier, worm-eaten and falling away to dust, and a few mattocks, used (nobody knows when) in digging the graves, were the only furniture in the place. Upon the appearance of the two with the lantern, hosts of bats flew about in confusion, with their shrill dismal cry, flapping their wings against the walls, and seeking refuge up a Gothic tower rising from near the principal altar. The nature of the place, the solitude, the lateness of the hour, were all circumstances cal-

culated to excite terror, or at least to dispose the mind of any one to dreadful ideas or mournful images; and poor Don Litterio, who, when the sun was high above the horizon had thought upon this moment without anxiety, now that it had actually arrived, discovered how much more easy it was to talk than to act. He stood bolt upright in the midst, with his hands clasped, gazing on the bones that lay at his feet, and the walls green and mouldy from the dampness, but still preserving in some places the remains of old paintings, and awaited in horror the end of this devilry.

Don Michael laid on the ground a little bundle that he had brought with him. He then drew from it a book of exorcisms, put on a black stole ornamented with cabalistic characters, and began describing a circle with a wand, accompanied by numberless ceremonies; he also drew a door in the circle, by which he directed the Mayor to enter, with his left foot forward; and then presenting him with a talisman, commenced mumbling a confusion of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew words; now calling by name upon a hundred demons, in virtue of Divine power, now raising and now lowering his voice, and now making pauses, during which the echoes of the previous words might be heard, prolonged through the vaulted roofs, and some unfortunate bat would bounce up against the face of the poor magistrate, who seemed trying to shrink into himself, and was trembling and cold as ice. He feared every moment to see come out of some of the graves the originals of those interesting skeletons painted on the façade of the church, and was on the point of praying, as a

sort of penance, that the exorcisms of his horrid companion might be rendered vain. Whilst kneeling to carry his intention into effect, he felt a clap on his shoulder: he raised his eyes, and saw the whole space beneath the tower filled with a mysterious blue light, and perceived a human form wrapped in a winding-sheet, rising slowly from out of a hole.

The spectre stood motionless; we need not say how Don Litterio stood. Don Michael whispered, "Courage! courage! now's the time to show your fortitude. Quick! whilst you can, ask whatever you wish for."

But it was of no avail; the Mayor could neither move, speak, nor breathe. Don Michael therefore spoke to the apparition a few words in an unknown language, to which the ghost answered only by deliberately raising one arm and pointing to a grave, the stone of which did not appear very firmly fixed.

"Did you hear?—it says, that by digging *there* we shall find florins enough to content us."

But the other appeared to have lost all sensation whatever. Seeing that it was in vain to hope to move him, Don Michael himself went to the tomb, and without difficulty descended into it. A few minutes after he re-appeared with an iron vessel half covered with mould; and returning to the mayor, who had remained in the self-same spot without stirring an inch, he poured out before him a good quantity of gold coins, (or at least so they looked,) which fell in a heap on the ground, without having the effect, by their tempting appearance, of restoring health to the body of him who had occasioned himself so much distress *in his wish to possess them.*

The last coin had just dropped upon the golden pile, when the church door burst open with a crash. In rushed fifteen or twenty ugly-looking rascals, armed with pikes and partisans, and threw themselves on our two friends, presenting their arms to the breast of the one and the throat of the other. It was all the work of a moment : Don Michael had barely time to lay his hand on his sword-hilt ; but feeling four or five sharp points finding their way through his cloak, and one of them pricking him a little, it was plain that he had better stand quiet if he did not feel inclined to be killed outright.

As for the magistrate, he was already so completely terrified, that this new incident produced no visible effect upon him. He remained as he was found, with his eye-balls turned upwards, his head as it were stiffly fixed on his shoulders, his hands clasped and moving convulsively, and his fingers squeezed together with such force that his nails penetrated the flesh. The poor creature only said, in a voice almost stifled in his throat, " Do not kill me now ; I am in an act of deadly sin ! * "

The lantern had been upset in the scuffle, and shot up a flaring light from below on the new-comers, who, having stood still a moment to ascertain that the prisoners were not disposed, or had not the power, to resist, were recognised as part of that depraved race of men called in those times *Venturieri*†. We

* This reason for having life preserved, has, even in the present day, much influence over the so-called *Brigands* of the Campagna of Rome. The writer of these pages is acquainted with a man who in a similar manner escaped an otherwise inevitable death.—*Author's note.*

† *Adventurers, or volunteers.*

should now call them assassins : there were indeed folks of that name then ; but the above title was adopted as a distinction by bands of men composed chiefly of soldiers, deserters, who united themselves under a chief, in order to plunder the villages, and commit as many crimes as possible.

Some of them were armed with breastplates or corslets, others with iron helmets, some with swords, others with daggers, and one had only a knife ; many of them had conical hats ornamented with feathers or ribbons ; and nearly all wore, either on the bosom or the head, the image of the Madonna. Several had, instead of shoes, sandals of goatskin, with which they could keep their footing better in climbing the mountain heights. It is unnecessary to describe their visages. Seen by the light of the lantern, with their great long beards and whiskers uncombed,—nay, matted,—they seemed like so many demons let loose. One of them, flinging on the ground the partisan which he had been holding at the Mayor's throat, disarmed both him and Don Michael, and felt their dress to see whether they had any weapons concealed.

During this little fray, the spectre, disencumbering himself of the sheet, had again become a man of this world ; and knowing that there was no time to be lost, had clambered up into the belfry. There, seated on a beam, and clinging to some stonework that jutted out from the wall, he waited for the opportunity to escape ; and from the total darkness in which he was, he could very well observe, unperceived, what was going on below in the church.

Meanwhile the chief of the robbers, a youth apparently not more than seventeen years of age, of

horrid aspect, very muscular, and having a large scar extending across his forehead, which raised his eyebrows higher than was natural by about an inch, gave the Mayor a kick under the ribs to make him get up, at the same time sending forth that strange uncouth sound peculiar to dumb people. There could not be a more efficient cure for his stupefaction, and he jumped up, without waiting for a second dose. He was then taken into a corner, and with Don Michael was bound tightly, and guarded by some of the men, whilst the rest were engaged in picking up and counting the gold by the light of the lantern. When this was done they deposited it in a pouch of skin, which their captain had at his girdle, and then all departed, placing their prisoners in the midst of them, and, in the courteous mode in vogue amongst such gentry, told them to go on quickly, unless they wished to feel the points of their daggers.

After mounting about half a mile, by a steep ascent, and through places where there was nothing like a path, they halted, and placed bandages over the eyes of both prisoners.

Fear had brought back the power of speech to the magistrate, who began recommending himself to their mercy, crying at the same time like an infant, while the assassins diverted themselves with him, and did him no harm. But Don Michael, who, on that halt taking place, was thinking of the worst, muttered between his teeth, "By Jove, we are done for!" and then proceeded to treat with them as to the terms on which they would liberate them. But on his first attempt to speak, his mouth was effectually closed with a blow of a fist that sent a couple of teeth down

his throat. Being unable to use either eyes or mouth, he made the more use of his ears. He heard the robbers discussing amongst themselves how the booty was to be divided, and the prisoners disposed of: he could hear that they said something about ransom, and that they speculated upon which of the two was likely to pay most. Amongst various voices speaking in different dialects, though all Italian, he distinguished one that had a foreign, and he thought a German accent: but in the midst of his listening and thoughts he felt several hands seize hold of him, and he was placed on the backs of two men, who left the body of their companions, without his being able to divine in what direction they were going.

This journey lasted more than an hour, including halts at intervals, during which the person carried was not very gently flung down on the ground while the carriers rested themselves. In the meantime, what with the fear, natural even to a brave man, of having his throat cut by those villains, as if he were a dog, and what with the tightness of the cords that bound him, and the agony of being jogged along on the shoulders of those fellows, lying upon the sharp projections of their armour, Don Michael found his situation becoming cruelly painful.

At last the journey was ended. He heard the noise of a heavy gate opening: they went through it, and it was closed with a crash behind them. Here Don Michael was unloosed, and, proceeding a little further, the bandage was taken from his eyes, and he found himself in a dark chamber, into which however a beam of moonlight entered by a loophole. In one of the walls there was a small low door, well pro-

tected with bolts and bars : it was open, and a voice said to him, " Go in." He stooped in order to obey, and whilst with one foot forward he felt to ascertain if there was any descent, a blow on the back, from the butt-end of a pike, sent him to the bottom of a flight of steps rather quicker than he wished, and in a manner that would have made it impossible to give any account of how many steps he had descended. A bolt which went creaking into its place, convinced him it was useless to hope for an escape through that door.

The place was dark as pitch. The first thing he did was to put his hand to his mouth, which had been considerably hurt by the blow received, and he withdrew it bathed in blood, at the same time discovering that for the future he should only be able to boast of thirty teeth, instead of thirty-three.

" If the devil had throttled thee and thy father, as he ought to have done, my teeth would not have been scattered amongst those brambles," said he to himself, thinking of the personage who had employed him in this enterprise. Nevertheless he comforted himself as well as he could, and extending his arms endeavoured to find out what sort of a hole he was in. He perceived a small aperture, high up in the wall, through which entered a feeble light, and he thought he heard the dashing of waves against the outside of the building. Groping about and shuffling his feet, he discovered something soft in one corner, which proved to be some straw : he lay down on it, and remained waiting for what fortune might send him.

CHAPTER X.

THE reader, without doubt, has guessed that the spectre was no other than the captain Boscherino. It is for us to inform him how the band of robbers were so well prepared to upset Don Michael's cunningly devised plot. It came about in this manner. Don Litterio happened to have a good-looking maid-servant, who was the cause of some impertinent rumours flying about, injurious to the magistrate's character for conjugal fidelity. This young woman, however, whether or not she might have paid any attention to the quinquagenarian sighs of her master, was certainly not deaf to those of her master's groom. Through the links in this chain of love, the mayor's secret of going at night in search of the treasure descended from the master to his rival in the stable. This same groom had some cronies amongst the band of Pietraccio, (such was the name of the chief of the brigands,) and managed matters so discreetly, as to arrange that, should the treasure be discovered, a part of it should find its way into his purse, instead of the whole going into that of his master.

And now, before we return to Don Michael, it is proper that the reader should be informed respecting the localities in which the facts we have just narrated took place. At the extremity of the bridge leading to the little island of St. Ursula, stood a massy quadrangular tower, very similar to that which may be seen on the bridge Lamentano, in the road from Rome to Sabina. All passage through it was closed by a large

heavy gate, with a portcullis made to fall when necessary, and a drawbridge. A winding staircase led up through the tower to two upper floors, in which were quartered the Commandant and his soldiers; and on its summit there was a terrace surrounded by battlements, through which peeped the muzzles of two pieces of cannon.

The abbess of the convent, invested with baronial rights, kept in her service, as a guard, a company of eighty foot-soldiers, pikes and harquebuses, commanded by a German soldier of fortune, by name Martin Schwarzenbach, who found it much more pleasant to tickle his stomach in that tower, where he was paid well and fed better, than to go exposing and bothering his life in the field of battle, where he was well aware that the delights of ill-using and plundering people were frequently interrupted by a bullet from a harquebuse or by the end of a partisan. His three ruling passions were, to keep at a safe distance from knocks and blows, to plunder, and to swallow as much Puglian wine as he could hold in his stomach, which in this particular strongly resembled a good-sized cask. These inclinations of his might be read in his countenance; the two first in a pair of eyes equally expressive of covetousness and cowardice; and the latter in a patch of bright scarlet, which, leaving the rest of his face pale, concentrated itself on his nose and its vicinity. His beard was red, and something like a goat's; his lips purple; and his body might have been suited to bear the fatigues of a military life, had not his drunken excesses at the age of forty shattered his constitution, and reduced it to the feebleness of that of a man of seventy.

His office consisted in keeping the gate shut during the night. The different armies, carrying war and carnage through the surrounding country, never had any hostile intentions against the convent; there was therefore no necessity to guard against *them*. The bands of brigands, too, that scoured the territory, would not dare to attack eighty men protected by a good strong tower and two cannon. But there was another reason which allowed Martin Schwarzenbach to sleep soundly, although surrounded by gentry of this description. It is true he was employed by the abness to guard the convent, but he did not see that it was any part of his duty to be the guardian and defender of the ducats and florins of the inhabitants of the country, or of any people that happened to pass through it. As, however, he could not very well dive into other folk's purses openly, he constituted himself (to use a modern expression) a sort of sleeping partner in the trade carried on by Pietraccio, encouraging him, and even aiding him with his own men when occasion required. He concealed money and goods, and even persons when the latter might be expected to produce a good ransom. These operations of his were carried on so cautiously, that the persons robbed or taken would have charged any one with the crime rather than Martin, who was simply accounted the most consummate sot in the neighbourhood.

In the clutches of this very man Don Michael had fallen, and he had passed the night in all sorts of fancies, without being able to divine in the least where he was. At daybreak he heard three discharges of artillery, such as were fired every morn-

ing from the citadel of Barletta. With some difficulty he succeeded in clambering up to the loophole, through which the dungeon was lighted; but the opening was so overgrown outside by the ivy, that all he could see out of it was a small tract of the sea. Suspending himself for a short time in this uncomfortable situation, he saw a boat pass laden with garden-stuff, and immediately recognised the man rowing it as his friend the gardener of the convent: he was then nearly certain that he was at the bottom of the tower which defended its entrance.

He had hardly descended from his elevated peephole before the prison door opened, and he was dragged by two muscular-looking ruffians upstairs into the Commandant's chamber. The Commandant had just risen, and was seated, only half-dressed, on the edge of his bed, before a table covered confusedly with the remains of the last night's debauch. A rail, which surrounded the walls of the room, was furnished with pikes, harquebuses and their *rests*, breastplates, and other pieces of armour. He looked at Don Michael on his entrance, his eyes with difficulty raising the wrinkled and falling eyelids that covered them; and beating the floor with the heel of his boot he said, "You must know, master,—I don't know what you call yourself,—that whoever passes the night in my hostelry pays me a hundred florins of gold, weighing ten pounds of the mint of Florence; or, if he likes better, that of St. Mark: otherwise, a bit of cord, a stone round his neck, and a bathe in the sea excuses him from paying scot. Which of the two would you like best?"

"What may be best for *me* may not be for *you*,"

answered Don Michael firmly; "you caught two of us in the church last night, but we were not alone. There was a third person, unseen by you, who watched you, and knows you; and at this moment your rogueries are known in Barletta, and you, not I, will have to take the bathe in the sea, unless you can devise means for preventing three or four hundred Catalans or Stradiotes battering to pieces the gate of this tower, or can induce them to hang you up to one of the battlements, in preference to making your peace with the water, which, if I may judge by what I see, you would in such a case taste for the first time." This idea was suggested by the sight of a half-barrel of wine, which the German kept at the head of his bed instead of a saint's image or a crucifix.

The above reply, given in such a haughty tone, was particularly vexatious to the Commandant. He drew his cap down over his eyes, and said, "If you imagine you are dealing with a boy, and think to frighten me with your bravados, I inform you once for all that I am not to be humbugged; and if your Albanians, or whatever you call them, should really come here, I have means to prevent my fearing them, or the sea, or the battlement. And really I hardly know why I do not seize you by the throat at this very moment, unless it is that I should like the jingling sound of your florins better than the croaking of the ravens that would come to peck out your eyes. So let us proceed to business: *there* are writing materials; give me an order for the money, and as soon as I get it you may go to the devil as it pleases you."

Don Michael seemed in no haste to answer, but stood regarding the other with the grin of a man who,

fearless of the consequences attending either behaviour, has still some doubt whether he shall take the matter seriously or in joke. The Commandant's wrath was on the point of showing itself, and perhaps in something more than words, when at last came this reply: "Signor Constable, you are evidently fond of florins and fond of wine, you ought therefore to be a pleasant companion. Indeed the good soldier's character may be thus summed up,—a rogue, a glutton, a fellow without godliness. Now what the devil has put you in such a disagreeable humour? Hear me; it is my wish that we should be good friends. It is true that I ought to be repaid for the night I have spent; and if it were not that—but enough—I forgive you for it, and would put you in the way of gaining something." (Here he twisted himself about and looked at the two men who had brought him up, and were still holding him by the arms.) "I say, my lads, have you nothing better to do than to stay here standing on each side of me, like the two robbers crucified with our Saviour? You may go, my good fellow," said he, releasing himself from one of them, and giving him playfully a pat on his cheek; and liberating himself from the other in a similar manner; "you may go too; you are of no use here; I can stand up very well without supporters. You had better go and keep an eye on the road from Barletta, and see who comes along that way: I want to chat a little with your master here. Why you know that I have no arms by me, and I am not accustomed to swallow swords for breakfast! No, the deuce is in it if that would not require even a harder stomach than yours."

The two soldiers were as much astonished as Martin at this free and easy behaviour, and both looked in their master's face to see what his intentions were. He nodded assent, and they withdrew. On finding himself alone with Don Michael, he esteemed it only prudent to stand on his feet, and place his sword within reach.

"Constable, you have asked a hundred florins for my ransom: I never before valued myself at such a low price; and to teach you to pay due regard to people of my consequence, I will give you *two* hundred." (The German's eyes opened wide, and his mouth began to water.) "Yes, *two* hundred; and *that* would be nothing to— If you were a man who could serve me with prudence and fidelity — I would do something for you that would astonish you. Aye! but it is useless: it would be necessary to be active and nimble; to know when to talk and when to be silent; in short, not to have that parsnip face, and those eyes, looking as if they were made of pap and oil."

Martin, on seeing such boldness in the prisoner's manner, thought he must be dreaming; and a thousand ideas floated through his brain, of having in his power perhaps some prince or other grand personage; but being unable to fix upon any likely one, and ill pleased with the want of respect shown in his own dominions, he answered, "But, in the name of the devil that possesses you, who are you? What do you want to be at? Speak! for I am growing tired of this, and I do not intend to be the jest of any one."

"Softly, softly, and keep your temper; for if the

humour comes upon me, I may say something else that may be less to your liking. Know then—"

A soldier entering interrupted Don Michael, exclaiming with alarm, "Constable! there is a cloud of dust on the road near Barletta, and coming this way. It appears to be a troop of light horse; at least so Sandro says, who has the best sight amongst us."

The German was uneasy, twisted about, and looked at his prisoner, who smiled maliciously, and said: "I told you so: but there is no occasion to be afraid; only act prudently, and all will end well. Go; and if there is anything new, you will inform us," said he to the soldier. "Well then, as I was going to say, you must know there is a personage here in the convent, detained by parties whose names need not be mentioned, who would like better to enjoy the pleasure of the world than to live eternally in the midst of lamps and crosses: I desire now to treat about putting her wish into execution. If one of these nights a boat should come with five or six men to carry her off, and the Constable should happen to hear dogs barking, or some shrill voice screaming out 'Help!'—you know that women have a trick of crying out long before they are hurt—he need not disturb himself, but turn the other way and go on snoring. For such a slight service as this there will come to him, as if they were dropped from the sky, five hundred sequins newly coined from the Venetian mint, or the French mint if he should prefer it; and afterwards, perhaps, a better command than that of guarding these female hypocrites."

Poor Martin, amongst his many vices, had hitherto preserved one virtue, namely, that of fidelity to the

persons in whose pay he served; and this was on the point of vanishing in face of such an assault as the above offer. But that immutable law which has decreed that nothing shall exist in this world perfectly good or absolutely bad, saved his character from total wreck; and he answered, with an intention of appearing mortally offended, although his reply was rather expressive of grief than anger: "Martin Schwarzenbach has served Milan, Venice, and the Emperor the full terms for which he was engaged, and has never betrayed any one. The Abbess has retained him up to the end of December 1503. If your lordship is some—how can I tell?—some signor, raising men for some Italian Prince, and wishing to engage me in the service, it is all very well; we will discuss the matter. You shall see my company. There are fifty pikemen, and thirty harquebusiers, all between twenty and forty years of age; and as to equipments, you will see that they do not want even the tongue of a buckle. If we can come to an agreement on the 1st of January 1504, should it please you, we will come and take the convent by storm, and carry off every one, down to the very cook-maid. But before that time, as long as I have a single cartridge or a dagger-blade left, no one shall touch a hair on the head of any of the nuns, or of the newest lay sister."

"Why, master Martin, do you think I do not know what your duty is? Do you think I would have the face to propose such a piece of rascality as that? You don't know me. The lady in question is neither nun nor lay sister, and has about as much to do with the convent as that half-barrel which you keep so con-

stantly beside you. Bless the man! it is easy to perceive that you are a shrewd fellow, and know that a man is a fool to run hard when walking quietly will answer the purpose; and, moreover, that a man must be mad to sleep with a cold stomach in the open air, when he has the choice of a roof over his head, and a comforting glass or two of Greek wine; and further, that he who has the opportunity of gaining five hundred florins without fatigue or trouble, or compromise of honour, ought to consider that coins of this description do not drop into a man's mouth every day like early figs. Come now, if you are a man of sense, we shall soon agree on the matter; and you had better determine quickly, for it will not be long before those horsemen arrive."

Martin's virtue, like that of most honest men, admitted of a certain degree of qualification; he accordingly replied, "Oh, if the nuns are not concerned, it would be altogether a different affair."

Whilst Don Michael remained silently musing within himself as to whether he should reveal to Martin the name of the lady whom it was intended to carry off, a loud altercation at the door of the chamber, between two soldiers and an old woman, put an end to the conversation.

"May the devil strangle you, you cursed old hunchback! there is some one here who ought to be here, and the Constable has something else to do than to listen to *you*," cried one of the soldiers, endeavouring to prevent the entrance of an old woman of short stature, crooked, and with a pair of eyes resembling mother-of-pearl edged with scarlet. She had more than half intruded herself, but the soldier still held

her clutched by the throat, dragging her skin in such a manner that it twisted her mouth three inches out of its proper shape. The old woman dug her iron nails into the hand that held her, so effectually that she was liberated instantly, and falling like a shot against Don Michael, she clung to him, and just escaped a blow sent after her, which if it had taken effect, woe to her!

"Hold off, you son of a villain!" said she, turning round to the soldier, who was sucking the blood from the deep scratches, and eyeing the old woman as a terrier dog eyes a cat that has just combed his nose. "Hold off! If you try again, you shall come off worse."

"And you, you ugly hag, take care how you come again to me when I am on guard." (Here he drew in his under lip, and imitated the old woman's voice.) "My good Sandro, do let me go into the convent, only for one moment, to speak a word to the strange lady for some bandages for Scannaprete's wound, and a little powder for Paciocco, who has the fever." (Returning to his natural voice,) "A little canker to kill you, and those that send you. Go back, go back! or I will give you something you may not like. May my tongue be torn from its roots, as the Duke Valentino (may God reward him for it!) tore out your master's, if I do not send you back in the way you deserve, you night-witch of St. John!"

The old woman had abundant materials for a rejoinder; and she certainly ought to have adhered to one of the fundamental laws of the female code, that of having the last word; but she was in haste to tell something of more importance. So turning her back

upon Sandro, with a gesture of scorn more easily imagined than described, "Signor Constable," said she, "if you don't stir yourself you will be in a pretty pickle; there has been an infernal night up in the bushes there. The men returned an hour before dawn: they brought with them that strange looking Christian whom you took yesterday evening. He was as frightened then as if he had been dead three days; but his fear has not lasted long, Pietraccio has flayed him as you would a young kid."

"How!" exclaimed Martin and Don Michael, both at once; "have they murdered the Mayor?—why? where? how?"

"What! would you have me tell you? Blessed Virgin! Pietraccio wanted to make him understand that he was to pay I know not how many ducats for his ransom, and you know his way of making himself understood without a tongue: the other stood with his eyes fixed and glassy, more in the other world than this. Then my master wrote on paper what he wanted, and wished him to read it. Worse and worse: the poor creature looked like the statue of St. Rocco at the chapel of Belfiore. Pietraccio then gave him three or four blows on the face,—but such ones! *That* would not do either. At last he leaped upon him—and you know when he leaps—his dagger was planted here at the pit of the stomach,—down, down it went to below the girdle. I need not say more; what's left is a shame to manhood. But after all, what can you expect? Pietraccio's a rash boy: I have told his mother so many a time—'Ghita, your boy's hands are growing dangerous,'—but there is no teaching him steadiness."

This intelligence and the manner in which it was narrated, struck the two listeners so forcibly, though from different causes, that neither of them could find words to speak. The old woman continued: "In short, that is nearly all, and I must go, for I have been on my legs since yesterday. We had gone to sleep for an hour; Cocco d'Oro comes running and crying, "Up, up, the sheriff and the guard!" Up we jump, and what do you think? they are already under Malagrotta, and are coming on fast: so we take to our legs and make for the mountains. They are all concealed now in the grotto of Focognano, without a loaf or a drop of water, and through the woods there are at least two hundred *sbirri* and soldiers: and God grant that some of our men may not starve. Up, then, and be quick! find out some remedy; they will be discovering the murdered magistrate. Blessed Virgin! what a precipice we are on; and Ghita says you must not forget the provisions, so send them as soon as ever you can."

On finishing these words, she saw the remains of the supper still on the table, and gathering them up quickly without asking leave or licence, she filled her apron with bits of bread and meat and bunches of fruit, poured into a gourd-bottle as much wine as it would hold, and drank off the remainder, wiped her mouth with the back of her hand, and went out, pushing Sandro out of her way, and not stopping to call him either ass or beast.

Martin found his head confused with too great an accumulation of weighty matters. With one hand on his beard and the other behind his back, shaking his head, and fretting and fuming, he paced back-

wards and forwards through the chamber. The prompt movement of the people from Barletta warned him to put faith in Don Michael, who had foretold it, and made him the more inclined to think him really the man of importance that he described himself. He determined without further delay to come to terms, in order that his practices might not be discovered, when the men arrived who were in search of the murderers of the Mayor. Accordingly, laying aside his consequential manner, and even humbling himself, he offered his assistance in the proposed scheme, provided he might in other matters reckon upon being countenanced by his new employer.

The agreement was scarcely made ere the trampling of horses was heard coming along the bridge, and a voice loud and sonorous as a trumpet, calling out repeatedly for the constable Schwarzenbach. The latter descended, and found Fieramosca and Fanfulla da Lodi at the head of their cavalry waiting for his appearance.

The reader may perhaps recollect the name of Fanfulla amongst the champions selected on the part of Italy. Amongst the military men of Italy there was not one possessed of more desperate bravery than he: for the slightest possible object, and sometimes without any at all, he would put his life in imminent danger. He had scarcely a thought beyond amusing himself and making use of his limbs. Agile as a leopard, all sinew, with a remarkably nimble and compact frame of body, it seemed that nature, knowing that the latter would inclose a disposition of mind rash almost to madness, had studiously formed

it in the manner best calculated to resist the most terrible trials. The son of a man in the service of Girolamo di Riario, he had been educated for the military profession from his infancy, and had been successively in the pay of all the Italian states; for, sometimes from quarrels, sometimes from disobedience, and not unfrequently through his own volatile character, he seemed destined to be always changing masters. The Florentines had been the last, and he parted with them in the following manner.

At the siege of Pisa, an assault was made against the town, and had not Paolo Vitelli, the commander of the republican forces, sounded a retreat and kept back his men absolutely by force, the Florentine soldiers who were full of ardour in following up their first advantage, would certainly have taken Pisa that very day; and this conduct of Vitelli, afterwards proved at Florence to have been treachery, was, as every one knows, the cause of his death. Fanfulla, always foremost in a battle, had succeeded in ascending a scaling-ladder and reaching a battlement: wielding his sword, he effectually made room for himself; he already stood on the wall, and dealt his blows and thrusts in such a desperate style, that in a very short time his comrades would have seized the opportunity and followed him in numbers. While in this predicament, the retreat was sounded, and he was left there alone. He could hardly persuade himself to retire, but at length descended, fuming and roaring with rage, amidst showers of javelins, stones, and musket-balls, which however did him no kind of harm, for he returned safe and sound to the camp,

running like a madman, and abusing all whom he met. In the Commander's pavilion the Florentine commissaries and Vitelli were assembled in council. Wild with rage Fanfulla rushed amongst them, calling them traitors, and, without thinking of the who, the how, or the where, began, with a large stick which he had picked up in his way, to lay hard upon all of them a storm of blows, and kicks, and pushes; so that partly owing to his strength and activity, and partly because of the attack being so strange and unexpected, he put them in such confusion, that they found themselves knocked over, and lying on the ground considerably damaged, before they could discover the personage to whom they were indebted for this novel treatment. After an affair like this, it may be supposed that he did not wait to take formal leave, but leaped on his horse, and was some distance from the camp by the time that all the grandees were on their feet again and began to think of giving orders to cause his apprehension. Having in this manner left the Florentines, he had entered the service of Prospero Colonna, and was now with the rest of his company in Barletta.

The intelligence brought there by Boscherino, that the Mayor had been taken by the brigands, communicated in a manner calculated to prevent any suspicions falling on him, had put in motion the sheriff and sbirri of the town, who immediately advanced up the mountains. Fieramosca and Fanfulla, with a body of cavalry, followed to assist them, and sending forwards the civic officers, they remained guarding the entrance to the valley in which the ruined church was situated. They received from the hands of the sbirri

two prisoners, who had been captured with considerable difficulty, and escorted them to the tower commanded by Martin Schwarzenbach.

When the Commandant appeared under the gateway, these two unhappy wretches, surrounded by the soldiers, were waiting for him to come and open the door of the prison. One of them was the robber chief, Pietraccio, a ferocious young man, with the limbs and countenance of a savage, his shock of red hair matted and hanging down over his eyes; his naked arms, still soiled with the blood of the magistrate, were bound across his breast so tightly that the cord entered the flesh; and altogether he had the half-villainous and half-disheartened look of a wolf just caught in a snare. The other was a woman of commanding height and fine form and features; but long exertion and troubles, familiarity with crimes, and the despair occasioned by her present perilous situation made her appear much older than she really was. A wound received on her head whilst defending herself, had taken from her the power of moving otherwise than on the arms of two of the soldiers. They let her down upon the pavement, and in that rough and sudden change of posture, the redoubled pain of the wound caused her to open her eyes and utter a deep groan, and the blood flowing down from her forehead, streamed over her face and bosom. The dungeon in which Don Michael had been was opened, and she and Pietraccio were thrust in, bound as they were.

The soldiers having got rid of these prisoners returned to the wood, to see if there were any more to be taken charge of. Fanfulla accompanied the Com-

mandant upstairs into his chamber, and Hector availed himself of this short interval to go to the stranger's cottage. The ladies, little expecting him at such an hour, were of course surprised at seeing him, and as soon as the usual compliments were over, their curiosity was satisfied by hearing the cause of his coming to the convent. Relating the pursuit after the brigands, he told them that a woman had been taken prisoner, together with the chief; that she had defended the entrance to a grotto in which the robbers had concealed themselves; had wounded several of the sbirri, but was at length felled to the ground by a severe gash in the head.

Ginevra, touched with compassion for them in such a wretched situation, wished to go and render them such comfort as was allowable. She went to a closet where she kept different sorts of medicines, ointments, and powders, which, as we have seen, had been called into requisition by the brigands on previous occasions, and busied herself in preparing what she thought might be wanted, begging Fieramosca to go to the Commandant for the key of the prison. Hector acceded to her wish. As he was ascending the well-staircase leading to Martin's apartment, he heard on approaching the door, a strange scuffling of feet, and could not guess what could be the cause. Pushing open the door, he saw Fanfulla, with a great two-handed sword, which he had taken from the rack, playing with it as if it had been a switch. He parried, twirled it round in the *moulinet* style, and made thrusts and cuts with such velocity, that the sword could no more be distinguished than a whirlwind, and if he had been defending himself against an army, he could

not have done better. Hector, who was on the point of entering the room, stepped back a little, to avoid being stabbed or slashed, and looked on with a smile at this wild game which the other was playing, unaware of his being watched. The blows which whizzed through the air, unfortunately for the master of the house, did not go clear of everything. Whether it were from carelessness or malice, one of them terminated the long services of the little cask that lay by the bed-side, splitting it in two, as if it were a nut, and the liquor it contained found its level in the lower part of the floor.

"The wine is tapped late this year," exclaimed Fieramosca, at last, with a smile: and Fanfulla, turning to where the voice came from, let the sword fall from his hands and tumbled himself on the bed with such clamorous roars of laughter that he seemed out of his senses. "Why, what have you done, you mad fellow?" continued Hector; "Look, look! we have been here only half an hour, and there is more damage done than a troop of Catalans would have done in a week.—But where's Martin?"

Fanfulla at length succeeded in moderating his transports, and replied, "He was here just now, and was saying that it was only the Swiss and Germans who knew how to wield a two-handed sword: I answered that he was quite right, and begged he would teach me a little, and doing my first exercise as well as I could, I made a notch in his dear little barrel, (hang me if 't was intentional,) and he is absolutely seriously hurt and vexed. Think of the brute! he won't bear anything himself, and yet he said that we poor Italians can't handle a sword! In fact, we have

had some rough words, and he has gone away dealing out oaths and bravados. What would you have done? Without caring to measure weapons with such a swordsman as he, I certainly did send him a challenge in the Lombard fashion, and said, 'If you will only come down into the meadow before the tower, I will give you a notch on that German skull of yours, in order to prove that the one on your dear little barrel was merely accidental.' "

"And what was his answer?"

"That he would get out of my way, for I was evidently stark mad." As soon as he had uttered these words, Fanfulla again flung himself on the bed laughing, and threw about the room everything within his reach.

The facts were just as described above. The commandant was not inclined to have anything to do with such a wild fellow, and was moreover out of humour at the waste of his wine; he accordingly went up by a ladder to the upper floor, where Don Michael was concealed, venting curses in German all the way. From this fortress of his he heard Fanfulla's description of what had passed, and bawled out abuse every now and then, to which the other replied in similar style, by way of parenthesis, whilst going on with his story. Fieramosca, who was not fond of such jokes, acted as mediator, and with considerable trouble at length brought the parties to amicable terms. Fanfulla went out, still very much amused; and Hector, who could himself hardly forbear laughing when he saw the German gazing on the two halves of his cask, with the eye of a miser who finds his money-chest broken open and empty, explained

Ginevra's wish to enter the prison, and in very civil terms requested that she might be allowed to do so.

The Commandant, in the mean time, had set up on their ends the two pieces of the barrel, and using a cloth as a sponge, he was busy sopping up the liquor and squeezing it out into the recipients, endeavouring to save what he could of the remains of his discomfiture. On hearing the wish of Ginevra, he growled out: "Ay, ay! these assassins manage to find friends, but a poor man who attends to his own concerns, and does no harm to any one, not even in joke, meets only with mad fellows that sack and plunder his house."

"My good Master Martin, you have been certainly ill-treated, but you are aware that I have had nothing in the world to do with it."

"I wish I had had nothing to do with it; but I foolishly went to beg that they would come and amuse themselves in my house."

Fieramosca continued pressing him. "Well, well, come back in half an hour, and you shall have admission to the dungeon;—and I should like to see you all perish there," he muttered between his teeth; but Fieramosca was by that time half way down stairs, and did not hear this amiable conclusion.

CHAPTER XI.

THE capture of Pietraccio and his mother was an event which might be productive of the most serious consequences to Martin, and disturb most materially

the execution of Don Michael's plans. They talked the matter over between them, and both agreed that at all risks the escape of the murderer must be accomplished, in order that the latter, on his being taken to Barletta, might not cause the discovery of the Commandant's malpractices. But it was by no means easy to devise a mode of effecting this escape without implicating the man whose duty it was to have guarded him securely.

On Fieramosca's coming to the Commandant to beg permission to enter the prison, Martin was so vexed and confused by the quarrel which had just occurred with Fanfulla, that he was unable at first to decide whether this request might aid or defeat his own projects. He had, however, sense enough remaining, to take time to consider; and trusting in the cunning of his new friend, he mounted the ladder and returned to him, in full confidence that Don Michael by this time would have discovered the means of extricating him from his difficulties. The moment that Don Michael heard of Fieramosca's request, he exclaimed, "If we had employed and paid him, he could not have served us better. Leave it all to me, Constable, and you shall see if I do not know how to manage matters neatly. But—remember!"

"You may be sure that I will. But then—the nuns—"

"Oh, the nuns!" replied Don Michael, laughing, "make yourself easy on that point, we will not touch them. Come now, let me have the keys of the prison, and wait here for my return."

Taking the keys, he descended to the ground-floor, and carefully opened the door of the dungeon with-

out making the slightest noise. He pricked up his ears, and perceiving that the woman was talking to her son, he took his station on the uppermost of the few steps leading down into that dark hole; and by bending forward and stretching out his neck, he was able to hear and see the two miserable wretches. The female prisoner had been placed on the ground in a recumbent position, with her head resting on a block of wood that lay in a corner; but the agony of her wound having caused violent fever, during her twistings and struggles she had fallen with her face on the damp cold stone floor, and had not strength to raise herself again. Her son, having his arms tightly bound across his chest, so that he could not stir them an inch, had made several useless attempts to assist her, till at length he had despairingly flung himself on his knees by her side, directing his stupefied gaze sometimes on his mother and sometimes on the dungeon walls.

The miserable woman every now and then endeavoured to raise her head to its previous position, but was too feeble to do it by herself. In one of these struggles the son at last succeeded in introducing his knee under her head, and placing it again on the hard wooden pillow; but this motion caused her such acute pain, that, raising her hands to her head and uttering a prolonged groan, she exclaimed, "Curses on the blade of that Calabrian villain!—But if the devil will only give me two minutes, I wish that you should know who you are,—Oh! why should I pray to God and the saints? Did they listen to me when I did pray to them?" Here raising her dull eyes with difficulty towards the arched roof, she uttered blas-

phemies that would make the hair of any human creature save Pietraccio stand on end. "And yet," she proceeded to say, changing that brutal despair into another equally deep and more painful, "and yet even *I* once hoped for mercy and pardon! when I used to chaunt with the rest of the nuns! Curses on the hour when I entered that threshold!—But of what use is this? I was Satan's child before my birth. I have endeavoured to flee from him,—see how I have succeeded!" Here she again raised her eyes upwards, and said, with an expression beyond the power of language to describe, "Art thou contented?" Then turning to her son: "But if you can ever escape from this place—if you are a man—he who has caused my death and your misery and ruin, will burn with me through eternity, if the priests speak truth. That night in Rome, when I placed thee aside—bloody wretch that I was!—in order that I might be able to murder that gentleman,—and you, foolish creature, cried out before I could reach him, and so they took hold of you, and made you the deformity that you are;—'twas *Cæsar Borgia*!—When that man was studying at Pisa, (I was then in a convent,) he became enamoured of me—and I, mad fool, of him. How could I know what he was? One night he came to me; I had a little daughter, seven years old; she slept in an adjoining chamber; she awoke; she saw him getting in through one of the windows, and began to cry. Woe to him if he had been discovered! for he was then just made Bishop of Pampeluna. He placed pillows on her head—down went his knees—the monster! I fell senseless on the ground. Swear to me now by the horrors of

hell, that you will murder him, and avenge my death; make a sign with your head that you swear it,—this one last request!"

The assassin, with his horrid eyes opened wide upon his mother, made a motion with his head, signifying that he would do it; and she took a chain from her neck which she wore concealed and next to her skin, and added: "And when you have torn out his heart, shake this chain before his eyes,—your mother returns it to him! But I have not yet finished. Oh, for a moment longer, and then I care not! When I revived, I found myself extended on the bed—Oh! my speech is going!—beside my poor Inez. How beautiful she was, and now she is in Paradise!—and *I—I*—why must *I* be damned in hell?"

These last words were accompanied by a yell that made the vaulted dungeon tremble. She was dead! Pietraccio was not much moved: with a vacant gaze he regarded the last convulsive motions of his mother. When she had expired, he drew back and crouched down in the furthest corner, like a wild animal that trembles and retreats as far as it can when shut up in a cage with the dead body of one of its species. His mother's narrative, made interruptedly and in a sort of delirium, had only been partially comprehended by him: the ideas which he retained most vividly were, that he had to revenge himself against Cæsar Borgia on account of innumerable wrongs, but more especially, in *his* opinion, for being himself reduced, by the barbarity of that man, to the wretched state in which he found himself.

This narrative, however, produced a very different

effect upon the Duke of Valentino's attendant. Any one who had seen him during its relation would have thought that every word of it was depriving him of a portion of vitality, so fearfully did his countenance change. When the female sunk lifeless on the floor, it was almost a miracle that he was able to save himself from doing the same. He feebly tottered into the dungeon, with trembling hands cut the cords that bound Pietraccio, fixed his eyes for an instant upon the chain round his neck, and then said, "Within a few minutes a lady and gentleman will be coming to visit you: they wish to liberate you, but not that your escape should appear their doing. Be on your guard; and when they approach that woman, to see if they are in time to render her any assistance, take to the steps; fly with the utmost speed, and avoid being caught. You are already condemned to death!"

Having uttered these words with the greatest rapidity, as if he had burning coals beneath his feet, he cast a fugitive glance of horror on the woman's corpse, left his dagger in Pietraccio's hand, and in a moment was with the Commandant in his apartments. It will hereafter appear, in its proper place, why what he had seen and heard caused even to this villain such powerful emotion.

The reader will now perhaps exclaim, "Shall we never have done with these dismal affairs—these assassins, traitors, dungeons, deaths, demons, and what not?" If we have guessed what is passing in his mind, he will excuse us in thinking that he has not divined *our* intentions, which were precisely at this moment to conclude these ugly stories; to send to

the devil Don Michael, Pietraccio, and Martin (for, to tell it in confidence, they began to be rather annoying, even to us); and to beg that he will take a flying leap into the midst of the citadel of Barletta, the appearance of which we shall find much changed from what it was when we were there before with Don Michael.

The walls of the courtyard and the open galleries were covered with silk tapestries, of all the colours of the rainbow, and with wreaths of myrtle and laurel forming festoons and ciphers; and all the banners of the army were waving from the balconies and windows. A promiscuous crowd, composed of idle spectators and people busily engaged in the necessary preparations, was swarming in all directions, spreading through and filling the courtyard, and thronging up the steps and along the galleries. Soldiers, workmen, servants, and serving-boys were seen laden with tools and utensils, ladders, and furniture and ornaments of every description, as well for furnishing the table as for adorning the theatre. There were brought in provisions, fruits, wines and game, which the principal townspeople and the officers of the army rivalled each other in presenting to the Spanish Commander. There was a perpetual coming and going, calling out and shouting; in short, a hub-bub perfectly indescribable.

As the tower-clock struck 14*, the Great Captain made his appearance on the head of the outer steps, accompanied by all his barons; and the joy he felt at the near prospect of again seeing his dear child—an express had just announced having left

* About 9 a.m.

her within three miles of Barletta—had induced him to adopt particular splendour in his own costume on the occasion, and to request the same of his *cortège*. Over a tunic of rich cloth-of-gold he wore a cloak of bright purple velvet lined with sable, and on his head an elegant cap, of the like colours and materials, to match. From a magnificent sapphire, used as a brooch or clasp, sprung forth a curious and beautiful artificial plume, rather more than a span in length, composed entirely of small pearls strung upon threads of steel which waved gracefully over his brow, as if it had really been a downy feather. His sword and poniard with their sheaths, likewise of purple velvet, sparkled with gems; and on his left breast there was a sword embroidered in red, being the device of the order of St. Iago. He found in readiness at the foot of the stairs a milk-white Catalan mule, covered down to the ground with housings of purple shot-silk quilted with gold. As soon as he was in his saddle his suite mounted their horses, and the whole assemblage moved forwards to meet Donna Elvira. Prospero and Fabrizio Colonna, attired in suits of rose coloured calimanco richly embroidered with silver, rode on either side of him on two Turkish steeds, the most beautiful that had been seen in Italy for some time. The two cousins, then in the prime of life, sat in their velvet saddles, curbing the plunges and caracoles of their chargers with the gallant mien that became such soldiers as they were—two of the most valiant commanders that the military world then boasted.

In the crowd that followed might be remarked the frowning aspect and robust form of Pedro Navarr

the inventor of military mining, which had then been successfully used at the siege of the castle of Uovo. Diego Garcia di Paredes, the Hercules of his time, who was not accustomed to dress himself in any other material than iron, and, in fact, had not in his wardrobe a costume fit to appear in on such a day as this, had eked out his gala dress by furbishing his arms a little better than usual, and selecting the wildest and fiercest of the several battle-horses that he possessed; it was an enormous Calabrian horse, caught in its natural state but a few weeks previously, lofty, strong-limbed, and as black as a crow—not one hair of another colour. Paredes alone could or would have dared to ride this savage animal. Fresh from the woods, and finding itself in the midst of such a noisy throng, it became almost maddened, and chafed and foamed like a lion: but the cavalier's strength and stature, his heavy armour, and the aid of a bit almost half a yard long, making its mouth bloody, soon brought the beast under subjection: accordingly, after sundry strange leaps, (and no one was slow in making way for it,) it wisely determined that it was folly to put its strength in comparison with that of Diego Garcia, who was firm on his seat as in a vice, and laughed at all its useless struggles.

The flower of the Italian youth followed in company with the Spanish knights. Hector Fieramosca, riding between his two dearest friends, Inigo Lopez de Ayala and Brancalone, wore a mantle of blue satin embroidered with silver, the work and gift of the ladies of St. Ursula. He had the reputation of being the most accomplished horseman in the army.

The animal he rode had been presented to him by Signor Prospero : it was of a pearl colour, with dark mane and tail, and had been broken in and trained by its master with so much care and skill, that it appeared to understand his slightest wish without the aid of rein or spur. It would seem that Fieramosca was fated to cut the first figure in everything, amidst whatever persons, and wherever he happened to be. Faultless in form and features, his noble person was advantageously displayed by a dress tightly fitted to the figure, particularly on the legs, where there was not a single crease, and all of white satin ; and such was his beauty, and so graceful his every attitude and movement, that on the cavalcade passing through the streets the crowd saw and admired him alone. The young man could not avoid perceiving this triumph, but he almost blushed at detecting himself, for one single instant, indulging thoughts which are hardly pardoned in the other sex.

Last of all came the squires and attendants of these barons and knights. According to the custom of the time, every gentleman endeavoured to have in his train men of different nations, and the most barbarous and strange in appearance were the most highly valued ; whence in this retinue might be seen Turkish Spahis with their scaly cuirasses, scimitars and *canghiars* ; men from the kingdom of Granada, armed with their Moorish lances ; and archers from Tartary, (two of these were in the suite of Prospero Colonna, in costumes of the brightest colours, with bows and quivers of silver.) Then there were black Egyptians, armed with long javelins ; and their bar-

barous physiognomy, in contrast with European complexions and features, formed a picture full of the beauty of variety.

When Gonsalvo moved forward at the head of the cavalcade, he was saluted by a general discharge of all the artillery stationed on the towers and battlements of the castle, and by constant peals from the church bells. Amidst this din the shrill blast of the trumpets and the sound of other wind-instruments could now and then be distinguished, producing a harmony, if not perfectly accordant, at all events suitable to the martial joy which animated the war-like procession.

The Great Commander soon received a message, informing him that the Duke of Nemours, with his barons, had arrived in Barletta; he accordingly ordered a halt, and sent some of his attendants to meet them; and a few minutes after the French made their appearance at the opposite side of the square. The Duke seeing Gonsalvo already on foot, and advancing to meet him, immediately dismounted, and both of them nobly and gracefully extended the hand, and the meeting did honour to their mutual frankness and breeding. The French Commander courteously remarked that he should esteem himself most unfortunate, if, on being invited to a *fête*, he should be the cause of disturbing it, as would be the case if he delayed for one moment the parent's joy in embracing his child. Being aware that they were on their way to meet her, he entreated permission to accompany them.

It was impossible not to give a courteous reply to such a speech. Having again mounted their horses,

the two Commanders advanced to the head of the cavalcade, while the French suite fell in behind promiscuously, observing towards their new companions those polite manners of which the French in all ages have been the masters.

A little more than a mile outside of the gates the *cortège* again halted, on perceiving the approach of the guard of honour escorting the litter of Donna Elvira. She was accompanied by Vittoria Colonna, the daughter of Fabrizio, afterwards wife of the Marquess di Pescara, and who became so celebrated for her courage and constancy, her virtue and her talents. Gonsalvo flung himself off his horse, and rushed to embrace his daughter, who had left the litter, and pressed her to his bosom, calling her repeatedly *Hija de mi alma**, and loading her with caresses; his whole manner forming a curious contrast to the usual mature gravity of this great man.

Hector and Inigo had been selected by him to act as equerries to his daughter, and they accordingly advanced towards her, leading a palfrey for her to mount. The Italian youth bent one knee to the ground, and the noble damsel, lightly resting the tip of her toe on the other, seated herself on the saddle with the greatest possible elegance. A vermilion tint spread over Fieramosca's pallid countenance, when, on his standing up, Donna Elvira thanked him for the service with a smile and glance of her eyes, that showed plainly how gratifying to her was the selection of so handsome a youth for her especial attendance.

Her character (perhaps in consequence of the ex-

* 'Child of my soul'.

ceedingly tender affection of her father) wanted that maturity which might reasonably be expected in a lady even of the age of twenty years. Her warm heart and lively imagination were not always tempered by that correct judgement so rarely found in either sex, and which is nevertheless, after virtue, the brightest jewel of the soul. Her friend, Vittoria Colonna, united with this rare gift the quickness and brilliancy of a most superior intellect. Although both might be pronounced equally beautiful, it would have been impossible to find two beauties more dissimilar in character. Donna Elvira's sparkling eyes and constant smile (occasioned perhaps by the consciousness of her rare beauty) pleased at first sight; but the sublime, the truly Roman form and lineaments of Fabrizio's daughter, her beautiful countenance, similar to that given by the Grecian sculptors to their statues of the Muses, and a certain divine ray which flashed from beneath her brows, entered with a very different effect into the beholder's heart, and inspired an admiration and a passion to be obliterated only with the greatest difficulty. A keen eye might fancy it saw a tinge of pride in her appearance: if it were there, her virtue succeeded in conquering it, or at all events in bending it to good purposes.

CHAPTER XII.

THE cavalcade returned to Barletta, and dismounted at the citadel. The new guests were lodged in the

most sumptuous of the apartments; and the *cortége* having dispersed, every one prepared himself for the jousts and other amusements which were appointed to take place during that day.

The square had been selected for the arena, round which was a wooden barricade; and behind this booths, with rows of benches rising gradually like steps from the barricade, had been erected for the spectators. There was as much ornament, too, as such a place would admit of. In some stables, or rather dens, used for the purpose, several bulls, wild cattle, and buffalos had been kept for some days, destined for the spectacle then so gratifying to the Italians, and in which even the first of their nobles disdained not to take a part. In the same place the joust or tournament was to be held after the conclusion of the bull-fight; and the ground had therefore been dug and levelled so as to suit it for the occasion. The benches were already crowded with people in every part, and the neighbouring roofs, windows, and other elevated situations might be seen occupied by the eager spectators. The servants and officials, with their many-coloured doublets, having seen that the square was properly swept and watered, awaited the appearance of Gonsalvo. He soon arrived with his party and suite, having on his right hand the Duke of Nemours, and Donna Elvira on his left. Having rode round the arena, he dismounted before the largest and most ornamented booth or gallery on one side of the lists; and amid the *vivas* and other acclamations which the populace is always ready to bestow upon splendid dresses, gold and other finery, the noble party took their seats, and the signal was im-

mediately given to let loose the first bull. The hum and noise of the assembled thousands, and the contests which are sure to arise on these occasions, from the endeavours of all to procure the best posts, ceased upon the door of the den opening. An immense bull, his fore-quarters entirely black, and the hinder parts dark grey, rushed forth into the arena. Curling his tail, he went along for some time with strange abrupt leaps; until discovering that there was no outlet for him from that place, he stopped short, rolling his blood-red eyes, apparently suspicious of his destiny, and throwing up the soil violently with his fore feet.

Just at this time the heads and eyes of all the spectators turned towards one corner of the square, where there was a disturbance caused by two men quarrelling, of which no one knew the cause. To let the reader into this secret, we must return to the ladies of St. Ursula for a moment.

On the evening when Fieramosca brought them the intelligence of the combat being fixed with the French, Ginevra was not the only one who trembled at the idea of the danger to which he was about to be exposed: Zoraide also was terrified and made wretched by it. A haughty, high-spirited disposition is often united to a heart difficult of access; but should love by any chance gain an entrance there, what havoc does it cause! She knew no peace, no repose, no sleep from that evening: she passed her days ever occupied with one thought alone, ever turning it over in her mind, accompanied by the same ideas, and without the power of changing or dismissing them, and totally unequal to the task of any other

occupation, save that for a few minutes at a time she would seat herself before her frame, and work the embroidery on the mantle destined for Hector: but she would soon rise up again, pass into the balcony, and reclining there, with absent mind pluck the vine-leaves that shaded her: then she would hastily leave the house, as if engaged in important matters; but afterwards, as though forgetful of all around her, would slacken her pace and stop suddenly with downcast eyes, always avoiding the glance of her friend, for fear that she might at any moment involuntarily discover what she desired more than everything to keep secret from her.

Ginevra on her part was not less agitated than her friend, and perhaps the struggles she was undergoing produced more serious and powerful effects upon her. The affection she felt for the Italian youth, produced and nourished by early and long intimacy and friendship, and by the deep obligations she owed him, had become still more intense from the unfortunate extremity in which she now found herself, from the idea that a glorious death might shortly deprive her of him for ever, and from her virtuous remorse (for nothing inflames the heart and mind more than weighty obstacles) which warned her that it was her duty to make every endeavour to return to her husband, and separate herself effectually from that man who, in spite of the unsullied virtue of both, continually held her suspended over the brink of a precipice. She recollected with pain the vow she had made to God and the patron saint of the convent, to inform Hector of the resolution she had taken to abandon him: she excused herself for not

having done it, by the reflexion that on the day when she was about to announce it to him, he had come to tell them of that fearful challenge: but her conscience reminded her that even if this cause might pardon the past delay, it ought not to prevent her carrying her intention into effect at the earliest opportunity. Besides these thoughts, which were sufficiently troublesome, a painful suspicion had arisen in her mind on account of her friend. Females possess an inward feeling, I could almost say an instinct, which prompts them to the discovery of love, even when it is most industriously concealed in the recesses of the heart. Ginevra quickly perceived that Zoraide was no longer her former self: she guessed but too well the reason of this change. The two friends passed some days in this disagreeable situation, and there was no longer that affectionate and unrestrained familiarity which previously existed between them.

Meanwhile, what with the gardener Gennaro, the lay sisters, and the guard of the tower, there was no other topic of conversation in the convent but the festivities about to take place in Barletta; and whoever happened to go there on business, always returned full of accounts of the preparations, and what folks said about the coming *fête*. So that on the arrival of that blessed morning every soul, with the exception of those who were absolutely unable to do so, set off for the town at break of day, in order to procure favourable situations; and the gardener, who, like other inhabitants of southern climes, was mad after diversions of this sort, adorned himself in his holiday costume, stuck a fine *bouquet* in his hat, and

hardly was the dawn perceived when he prepared to enter his boat. To his surprise he met Zoraide at the top of the steps cut out from the rock that descended to the water, and she was dressed with much more study than the place and hour seemed to demand. "Gennaro," said she, "I wish to go with you to Barletta."

These few words were uttered by her with a certain degree of hesitation so new to Gennaro's ears, accustomed to hear her speak always with abruptness and resolution, that he stood regarding her some moments before he could reply respectfully, that she was his mistress, and it would only be doing him too much honour, and that he regretted not having swept the boat and brought cushions to make it more comfortable for her. "I will return directly, my lady, added he; I will do it in a moment:" and he wished to go for the things he had mentioned; but Zoraide seized hold of his arm, and detained him with such energy, that he looked in her face and thought to himself—"Is she mad or bewitched this morning, I wonder?"

She had left Ginevra asleep, and could not bear the thought of having to explain to her the reason of this expedition, to all appearance so strange, since it was the first time she had ever gone beyond the precincts of the convent. During every moment of delay, she was terrified lest her friend should make her appearance. Accordingly, with a few words, uttered in a tone more of command than entreaty, she induced the gardener to hasten down to his boat, and was taken by him to Barletta. He never ceased chattering all the way whilst he was rowing, telling

her that he would show her everything; that one of Gonsalvo's grooms of the chamber was his particular friend, and that no one better than he could find her a good place for viewing the grand sights. They arrived in the square near the castle just as Gonsalvo and his suite, accompanied by the French barons, were setting out to meet Donna Elvira; and not even the entreaties of Zoraide not to leave her by herself availed to prevent Gennaro's following the cavalcade amid the dust and the shouts of the crowd. He was merely amiable enough to conduct her to our friend Veleno's hostelry, promising her that he would very soon return.

Detained longer than he had reckoned upon, he was not very punctual in keeping his promise; and on arriving with her in the square, and trying to obtain a good post amongst the booths, he found them already crammed full of spectators, and with a glance of his eye perceived to his dismay that there was no hope of obtaining seats for himself and the lady he was escorting. Using sometimes entreaties and sometimes his elbows, in making his way through the throng that were crowding even behind the scaffoldings, he managed to thrust himself and to drag the lady under one of these, close to the aperture through which the combatants were to enter the arena: but from such a situation they could see nothing but the legs of the spectators dangling from above, and he fretted with vexation at having proved such an unprofitable, such an imprudent guide. By good luck, just at the moment when the bull was let loose, Fanfulla, who had been appointed director of the fights, came out from the arena; and his eye

falling on Zoraide, who was looking about her evidently but ill contented, the gardener without hesitation began begging him to find a place for her: "Your Excellency! most noble Knight! do please look at this poor lady; she is dying to see the combats, and we have come too late to—"

Zoraide, perceiving that the youth to whom this entreaty was directed, gave evidence by his bright glances that he felt more than a bare inclination to procure her a good situation for the sight, jogged Gennaro with her elbow to make him be quiet: but it was too late. Fanfulla approached her, took her hand, and conducted her to the back of the raised seats, using a riding-stick to make the rabble give way: he then raised his eyes up to the hindmost and upper row, to see where she might be best placed.

On the highest bench, in the best situation, seated very comfortably at his ease, his legs stretched out and his arms folded across his chest, sat (it would seem in punishment for his sins) the Commandant of the Tower of St. Ursula, Martin Schwarzenbach. Fanfulla would not have given up this encounter, in these peculiar circumstances, for a thousand ducats; with the assistance of his stick he could just reach Martin's heels, which were about nine or ten feet from the ground: he rapped them lightly, and the German turned himself round and looked down to see who was touching him. Fanfulla with great composure raised his hand about as high as his forehead, pointing his fingers downwards, and giving his head a lateral inclination; accompanying these movements with a glance of the eye and a twist of the mouth, which made the other plainly understand that

his seat would be convenient for the lady under Fanfulla's escort. The *tout ensemble* of his expression and gesture would almost have raised spleen in a dead body. Martin, by reason of his lofty position, thought himself tolerably safe; and not unmindful perchance at that moment of his dear destroyed wine-barrel, gave an impatient shrug of his shoulders, as much as to say, "Do get away, I don't want to have anything more to do with you!" and then resumed his former position.

"You German,—German, I say!" cried Fanfulla, shaking his head and raising his voice, "I'll lay a load of wood on your back! and as to the sight, make yourself assured that you shall see no more of the joust this day!"

Martin still would not budge, but from his growling and muttering between his teeth, it was evident that he was not quite comfortable, though his adversary *was* at such a distance below. Quick as thought, Fanfulla raised himself up on one of the cross-beams, and seizing the Commandant by his legs from below, so suddenly that the latter could not help himself, dragged him off his seat, and pulled him downwards expecting to bring him to the ground: but poor Martin, by reason of his corpulence, remained suspended in mid-air, wedged between two planks, and roaring out "Pity! help!" whilst the other continued inflicting sundry rough tugs and shakes, and was not content until the unlucky man fell to the ground, covered with bruises and scratches. This accomplished, he quietly remarked "It was much against my inclination, but I informed you before that you had seen quite enough of the joust for

today." He then succeeded in seating Zoraide and Gennaro in the vacant place, and made his way back through the crowd, laughing at the innumerable abusive remarks sent after him by the German, who was endeavouring to put himself to rights, feeling if he had any broken bones, gathering up his hat, sword, and gloves, and with difficulty restoring to his person something like a decent appearance.

Meanwhile Zoraide, from her elevated situation procured for her by Fanfulla's victory over the poor Commandant, had an excellent view of the whole amphitheatre, and the first use she made of it was to direct her gaze steadily round the circle, until it rested on the balcony opposite to her, where she perceived Hector, who was seated beside Donna Elvira, amidst the chief nobles, and endeavouring to entertain her and show himself worthy of having been appointed her attendant knight for that day. The Spanish maiden with her warm heart, and brilliant, nay perhaps giddy fancy, would fain attribute to those attentions a certain cause, deceiving equally her *amour propre* and her own bosom. Their conversation was watched by two females at different distances and with totally different feelings, who did not lose a single glance or gesture of this distinguished pair. One was Zoraide, who, although too far off to hear the sound of their voices, took so deep an interest in their dialogue, and so closely followed every attitude and look, that she soon ascertained that Gonsalvo's daughter knew how to appreciate the brave Italian, and did not regard him with the kindly feelings of courtesy alone: she hardly ventured to form her judgement of Fieramosca's thoughts at that

moment, but a heart situated as hers was usually starts even at a shadow. The other was Vittoria Colonna, who knew by experience that Elvira had not always the power of defending herself from the effects of a handsome face and insinuating speech. She felt a deep and sincere affection for her, and it appeared from her serious and penetrating glance that the daughter of Fabrizio could ill brook the continuance of that interesting conversation, and feared the consequences of it.

The first bull that entered the arena was at the beginning abandoned to the multitude, and several of the common people had ventured upon the combat with various success, but none obtained complete victory. At last Diego Garcia descended from one of the side-galleries filled with French, Spanish, and Italian knights, some of the former having begged him to give them a specimen of his dexterity in that species of combat. The skill of the *Matador* (or bull-killer) of Spain at the present day, consists in driving a dagger between the vertebræ of the animal's neck at the instant when it is lowering its head in order to gore its adversary. In those times, when the use of ponderous weapons gave immense muscular power to the arm, the grand feat was, with one blow of a sword to sever the head of the bull clean from the neck; and a man possessed of great strength and dexterity not unfrequently succeeded.

Paredes appeared in the arena in a tight dress of buffalo leather, his head uncovered, and resting his good two-handed sword on his left shoulder. Seeing that the bull had been wounded and was losing blood, he made a signal to the attendants, that he wished

for a fresh one: the tired animal accordingly had a noose thrown over it, and was led out of the lists. The den having been again opened, another of immense size and ferocious aspect rushed out: the contrast between the darkness of the den and the mid-day sun excited and exasperated it, and it began ranging the extent of the arena with tremendous leaps, according to the habit of the beast; until, perceiving its antagonist, it stopped short right opposite to him. The creature then lowered its head, roaring terrifically, its tongue hanging half a foot out of its horrid mouth. It stopped awhile, seemingly to plan its attack, at the same time tearing up the earth with its fore feet, and scattering it all over its neck and hind-quarters. Garcia's strength was almost incredible: at the same time it would have been rash in him to trust entirely to it when contending with a maddened bull, armed with a terrific pair of horns, and furnished with a neck of great size and full of sinew. The Spaniard was well aware that it was necessary to proceed with caution: with both hands he raised his sword high above his left shoulder, stamping on the ground two or three times with his right foot, and crying "Ah! ah!" The bull instantly lowered its horns and flung itself on its enemy—had almost reached him—when the latter jumped on one side, gave his weapon its full swing, and wielded it with such strength and fortune that the animal's head fell on the earth and the body tottered and sunk down after it.

Diego Garcia was greeted with a universal burst of applause, and returned to his seat amidst his companions. The French cavaliers, quite unaccustomed to a spectacle of this description, and seeing the

apparent facility with which the Spaniard had cut through the bull's neck, began to think it must be a very easy thing. Being men in the prime of life, of great strength, and particularly skilful in the use of their weapons, they naturally said amongst themselves, "There is no doubt we could do it just as well." The one that showed the most self satisfaction on this point was La Motte, whom we have met with before when Garcia's prisoner, and who had since then been ransomed. Particularly proud by nature, this man was always careful to show especial sourness and haughtiness in the presence of the Spaniard: not that he had any fault to find with the latter's treatment of him as a prisoner, but because it appeared so strangely disagreeable to have come off the worst in any combat, and still more so to have the man before him who had witnessed, and indeed been the cause of, his discomfiture. He praised Garcia's successful stroke, not to appear envious or uncourteous; but he did it with an expression of countenance which the French call *suffisant*, standing erect, elevating his chest, and, according to his custom, scarcely turning to the person addressed. "Bravo, Don Diego! a good cut, *par notre Dame!*" then turning to one of his French companions, he said sneeringly, "*Grand meschef a esté que le taureau, n'eust pas sa cotte-de-mailles: la rescousse eust esté pour lui.*" Paredes overheard and understood this speech, and stung with vexation muttered to himself, "*Voto à Dios que he de saber si ese perro frances tiene los dientes tan largos como la lengua*.*" He

* By G— I should like to see if this French dog's teeth are as long as his tongue.'

approached him and said, "How many gold ducats would you pay me if I were to treat you with the sight of cutting through a bull's neck armed with mail, while you cannot sever a naked one? But without talking of wagering ducats (for I would not have you think that Diego Garcia desires to be paid like a common *torero*) let us make it a matter of honour, and we will see whether you can imitate a blow of mine as easily as you deride it."

This defiance was anything but palatable to La Motte, and he bit his lip with vexation at having provoked it: not, however, from any feeling of cowardice, for he was in truth a brave and gallant man; but as it had never fallen to his lot to engage in combat with such an animal as that for an enemy, he was not very well acquainted with the mode of conducting the fight. Nevertheless he could not bring himself to acknowledge his inferiority even in this; and having Paredes before him, he was determined to run all risks. He answered boldly, "It is true that a French cavalier without the slightest dishonour might well decline to fight with a bull; but it shall never be said that Guy de La Motte refused to try the strength of his sword and arm on any occasion whatever: let us to the proof!" He then rose up from his seat, and passionately muttered between his teeth, "*Chien d'Espagnol, si je pouvois te tenir sur dix pieds de bon terrain, au lieu de ta bête!*" He had diligently watched and pretty well understood the manner in which Garcia with such good fortune had dealt his effective blow: he was young, an accomplished warrior, and a Frenchman,—could he distrust his powers?

A challenge of so novel a nature immediately caused great excitement amongst the young men of the party. The consequent movement and rumour attracted the observation of the noble group in Gonsalvo's gallery, and the cause of it very soon reached that quarter, was spread through the whole amphitheatre, and was favourably, indeed joyfully, received by the assembled multitude. It is true that the news, in passing from one mouth to another, underwent strange transformations, more especially when it reached those rows of people most remote from the scene of action. Zoraide's seat, being one of the very furthest in the whole amphitheatre from Gonsalvo's gallery, was precisely the point where the news was sure to arrive in the strangest dress, and the most contradictory too, finding its way to her round both sides of the arena. Those who were furthest off being eager to hear from those who were nearer, a strange waving of heads and turning round of faces was the consequence, which allowed one to perceive plainly the progress the information made in travelling through the different ranks of spectators. Genaro stood up, and stretched out his neck for some time, before his impatience could possibly be gratified by learning anything. He and Zoraide, and their neighbours, had seen the sudden excitement and confusion that arose in the booth occupied by the barons and knights, and then saw the knights leave their places and disperse themselves in groups through the arena. The amusements appeared to be interrupted: no fresh bull made its appearance. There was a perpetual repetition of the questions, "What is the matter?" "What has happened?" and always

without any answer following. At last, on one side, a person gave the interesting information, "The combat between the French and Italians is to be fought now in these lists." "Oh! oh!" said another, "very likely indeed! Don't you see Fieramosca sitting talking to that lady, as if he were nailed to the boards? He's thinking of anything but battle, depend upon it." Zoraïde heard this and sighed. She turned the other way, and met with a different version of the affair from a third person. "They say that the French Commander has challenged Gonsalvo; and whichever of them kills the wild bull that has been brought from Quarato is to be considered as the conqueror in the present war, and is to have possession of the kingdom." In the mean time several men were seen busy near the receptacle for the animals, evidently making preparations for the appearance of another bull. On one side Diego Garcia might be easily recognised with his great sword resting on his shoulder, surrounded by a number of his friends, who were apparently speaking all together and very earnestly, as though they wished to persuade him to do something; but on his bold brow, which towered above the other heads, might be read, even at a distance, his inflexible determination to fulfill his engagement, however great the risk. A little way off La Motte had his French companions around him, comforting him with assurances that he would not disgrace them.

One of the spectators, seated a little below our friends of St. Ursula, and next to Veleno, with whom he had been talking, turned round to Gennaro, and said, "This good man tells us that those gentlemen

down below are going to try which of them can empty a flask of Greek wine in one draught, whilst the bull is looking at him." All within hearing laughed at this piece of wit; but their laughing soon ceased when they saw Fanfulla at the head of the proper officers clearing the lists, in which the gigantic Spaniard remained alone and motionless, still with his ponderous sword on his shoulder.

Paredes, well aware of the difficulties he should have to encounter in coming out of this second contest with honour,—well aware that to cut through a bull's neck covered with iron armour was an undertaking very rash, to say the least of it, had provided himself with another enormous weapon, heavier than the first, and used by him only in assaulting or defending intrenchments. He had run home and made his armourer grind the edge purposely for the present occasion; had hastily refreshed himself by devouring the first food that came in his way and drinking off a good-sized flask of Spanish wine. As it happened, he had more than sufficient time for these preparations; for it was found that to arm the bull was not the work of a moment, or by any means an easy operation. At length the coat-of-mail was fitted on the animal's neck, the sleeves being drawn over its horns, the collar resting on its forehead, and the armour tightly fastened under its neck, leaving its face exposed. Any one who has witnessed bull-fights in our times may know that when the animals are inclosed in a dark place, it is easy to do almost anything with them after having once succeeded in throwing some strong cords over their horns.

At the sound of trumpets and other military instruments, a herald advanced into the arena, clothed in a red and yellow tabard, on the front and back of which might be seen the arms of Spain. Waving his baton he procured silence, and in a loud voice made the following proclamation :

" On the part of His Catholic Majesty Ferdinand, King of Castile, Leon, Granada, and the West Indies, &c. &c., Don Gonsalvo Hernandez de Cordova, Marquess D'Almenares, Knight Commander of the Order of St. Jago, Commander-in-Chief, Governor for His sacred Catholic Majesty of the kingdom on this side of the Faro*, prohibits all people here present, under pain of the rack, or such other heavier penalty as he shall please to inflict, from disturbing, either by word, cry, or gesture, or otherwise howsoever, the fight about to be contested against the bull in armour by the most noble and magnificent knight, Don Diego Manrique de Lara, Count di Paredes."

All the trumpets sounded in reply ; and the spectators of all ranks, some from a feeling of humanity, knowing that the life of the intrepid Spaniard might be sacrificed by anything unusual causing the bull to make a step more or less, and some from the fear of the cord, all remained motionless, and so perfectly silent, that on the opening of the den the creaking of the bolt was the only noise heard in this immense crowd, from one end of the amphitheatre to the other. Out rushed the bull, but not in the same haste as the others : he was of smaller bulk, but thick made, entirely black, and by far the wildest of all.

* Faro : the branch of sea dividing Sicily from the main-land.

He also came to a dead halt about ten paces from Diego Garcia, and began staring fiercely at him, lashing his tail, and throwing the dirt backwards into the air. His adversary watched him steadily, with his sword uplifted, well aware that one false stroke might be fatal to him. At last the animal advanced slowly for a few paces; then setting up a fearful bellow, in one tremendous leap, with lowered horns, he flung himself upon the Spaniard. Garcia, thinking to sever the head in the same manner as he had done before, jumped aside, and down came his great sword with all his strength; but whether it was that the weapon did not descend right on its edge, or that a stumble of the bull occasioned a *contresens*, the blow glanced off from the iron mail, and the enraged animal turned again on his enemy with such fury, that in order to keep him off the Spaniard had barely time to point his sword towards the bull's forehead, which was defended, as we before described, by the neck-piece of the armour. Here the immense strength of Paredes showed itself. Planting himself resolutely, with one leg a little advanced before the other, and grasping his great sword with both hands, its pommel resting against his breast, and its point at the bull's forehead, he succeeded in arresting its onset: the strong thick blade supported the trial; but so much was Don Garcia strained by this exertion, that his muscles, particularly in the legs, as well as the veins of his neck and forehead, were seen to rise, swell out, and tremble; his face became red, or rather purple, and he bit his under lip in such a manner that the blood streamed down his chin.

The bull, on finding that way to the assault was

closed, ran backwards to take room for another leap, and rushed a second time on his antagonist with redoubled rage. Garcia was quite in a fever of shame at his failure in the first attack; the more so from having, whilst taking a moment's opportunity of glancing up at the galleries, imagined he saw a malicious smile on the face of La Motte. This fancied sight added such a degree of fury to his strength, that raising his sword as high as he was able, he brought it down again on the bull's neck with an impetuosity that would almost have severed it if it had been made of solid brass. Perhaps in consequence of his reckless fury, the blow did not fall quite straight, but, lopping off one horn as if it had been a rush, divided the coat of mail and the vertebrae, and stopt at the skin of the dewlap, by which the head still hung to the body as the latter rolled over in the dust.

At this almost incredible feat of strength and skill there arose a general burst of acclamation, as loud and instantaneous as a clap of thunder. Garcia's sword fell from his hands, and he stood panting for a few moments, the vermilion of his face changing to a deadly pale, which however soon passed off. His friends immediately crowded round him with congratulations. One gazed at him with wonder, one admired his weapon, one the gigantic wound, and another the neatness of the stroke, whilst all the instruments sounded the notes of victory.

The Spaniard had accomplished his undertaking most honourably: it was now La Motte's turn. The incomparable blow dealt by his rival had plunged the Frenchman into a rather unpleasant reverie: he

could not hope to equal it; and should he even succeed (a matter of some doubt) in cutting off the head of a bull with its neck bare, he would come off with a much smaller degree of applause; whilst his inexperience in this sort of combat warned him that in all probability he would not be able to accomplish even this. Turning the matter over in his mind in every possible way, he could not contrive an honourable mode of retreating from his disagreeable predicament, but felt a mixture of envy, hatred and malice rising up in his bosom, to a degree that threatened to drive him out of his senses. When Don Garcia came to ask him if he was going to descend into the arena, La Motte answered in the negative; and in an insulting tone added, that French knights on horseback, with lance in hand, were the first in the world; and like true nobles and knights were accustomed to combat with their peers, according to the rules of war; that they abandoned the art of slaughtering bulls to rustics and butchers; so that he need not come to annoy him, or trouble his head any more in the matter. To these uncourteous and stinging words Diego Garcia replied with others still more cutting, and both instantaneously laid their hands on their swords. The quarrel, which took place in the booth occupied by the barons and knights, attracted not only the attention of Gonsalvo and the Duke of Nemours, but that of all the assembled spectators; and, to be brief, the result of it was another challenge, given by Garcia, who with great haughtiness, and in a loud and terrible voice, defied the French, and offered to combat them in knightly guise, and to convince them to their cost that the Spaniards, in

this mode of fighting, not only equalled them, but were their superiors.

The French and Spanish Commanders saw with pleasure that martial spirit was kept up and increased in their armies by means of these strifes, which appeared to revive, in those times, the romantic deeds sung by the poets and the troubadours. They therefore willingly granted license for this combat also; and in a few moments it was arranged that the number of champions should be ten on each side, and that the battle should be fought, within two days, on the sea-shore near Bari. But they imposed one condition on the parties, that the matter should be no further discussed during that day, in order that the festivities might not be disturbed. To this the knights on both sides agreed, and shaking hands as a mutual pledge, returned quietly to their places.

During the arrangement of this matter, the men employed to keep the arena in order had carried away the body of the last bull, and sprinkled sand and sawdust over the place where it fell, so as to obliterate all traces of blood. Fanfulla, who directed their operations, now received orders from Gonsalvo to make preparations for the joust or tournament. In a few minutes there was erected, in the middle of the arena, a partition or wooden wall, kept firm by a number of stakes fixed into holes which had been previously made for the purpose. It extended nearly the whole length of the place, like the axis traversing the two focuses of an ellipsis, and might be about as high as a man's chest. The two extremities did not quite reach the circumference, but left an aperture immediately under the galleries wide enough for

three horses abreast. According to this manner of joust, using blunt lances, the two knights took up their position at the opposite extremities, with the barrier between them and on the right hand of each; then spurring on their steeds, they galloped close along the side of the partition, striking each other in passing. This was the least difficult and least dangerous species of tourney, the road being marked out for the horse, and the point where he would meet his adversary for the rider. At each end of the lists was placed a large cask, with the top beaten out, filled with sand, in which lances of all sizes were stuck. Out of these the combatants took fresh weapons when their lances were broken, and neither of the knights unhorsed; and riding round the extremities of the partition, they returned to the encounter, each man on that side which his antagonist had occupied in running the preceding course.

When everything was in readiness, Fanfulla came to the foot of the gallery in which Donna Elvira was seated, and informed her that they awaited her pleasure in giving the signal to commence. Gonsalvo's daughter flung down her handkerchief into the arena; upon which the trumpets sounded, and the three Spanish knights, who had been selected as champions of the field for that day, entered the lists on horseback, armed at all points, with splendid harness, and adorned with most magnificent plumes and the richest embroidery, and offered three tilts with the lance, and two blows of the axe, to any one who chose to come forward and oppose them. These champions were Don Luis de Correa y Xarcio, Don Inigo Lopez de Ayala, and Don Ramon Blasco de

Azevedo. The heralds having advanced into the arena and proclaimed these names, prohibited, according to custom, the spectators from taking part in the contest, either by words or gestures. The shields of the three Spaniards were suspended in front of Gonsalvo's gallery, with their names written on them in gold letters, whilst the champions having caracolled round the circumference of the lists, took their station at one extremity, where the grand standard, on which were the towers and lions of Castile and the *bars* of Arragon, was displayed by a herald richly attired, and waved and fluttered over his head.

The prize to be awarded to the victorious knight was a highly ornamented helmet, having for its crest a silver image of Victory, holding in one hand a golden palm-branch, and supporting the plume with the other: this figure was the work of Raffaele del Moro, a talented Florentine artist. The prize was elevated on the point of a lance, which was fixed upright near the entrance through which the Spanish cavaliers came into the arena.

Bayard, the honour, the mirror of the military profession, was the first to appear in the lists, mounted on a fine Norman steed, a bay, with three black and white legs and a black mane and tail. The fine proportions of the animal were, according to the custom of the time, effectually concealed by ample housings which covered it from its ears to its tail; they were of a green colour striped with red, and had the gallant cavalier's device embroidered on the shoulders and flanks, and were finished off below with a sort of fringe or flounce, which reached down to the horse's

knees. On its head and crupper floated plumes of the like colours, which were also repeated on the pennon or *banderole* of the lance and the plume of the helmet. The person of this celebrated knight had nothing extraordinary in it, but on the contrary, if one could form a judgement of it, when covered with armour, did not bespeak even the ordinary degree of strength usually possessed by warriors of that age. He advanced through the arena, managing his steed with remarkable ease and gracefulness, giving it a feel of the spur and at the same time slightly checking the rein, so that the beautiful animal curveted and pranced, arching its neck, and switching a waving tail long enough to raise the dust from the ground. He reined up close under and immediately opposite to Donna Elvira, and having saluted her courteously, lowered his lance, and with it struck three blows on Inigo's shield. Passing it into his left hand, which already held shield and bridle, he laid hold of a battle-axe that hung from his saddle-bow and struck Correa's shield with it twice : this meant that he intended to run three tilts of a lance with the former, and to encounter two blows of the axe with the latter. Having done this, he returned to the entrance of the amphitheatre.

Inigo at the same time took his station at the other extremity, and both held their lances by their sides with the points in the air. Bayard, who till that moment had worn his visor raised, and exhibited a face rendered so pale with sickness that everybody wondered that he should think of jousting that day, directed his squire to lower and close it, at the same time remarking to him that in spite of the quartan

ague, (with which he had in fact been ill for months previously,) he was still confident that he should not on this occasion be so unfortunate as to disgrace the French arms.

At the trumpet's third blast, it seemed as if one spirit animated both the warriors and their chargers. The couching of each lance, the plunge of the spurs, the start in a career rapid as lightning, were simultaneous, and executed by each knight with equal fury and impetuosity. Inigo intended aiming at his adversary's helmet; a bold stroke, but not an easy one: afterwards, on approaching nearer, he thought that in the presence of such an assembly it would be better to attempt something that he was certain not to fail in, and accordingly contented himself with splintering his lance against Bayard's shield. But the French knight, probably the most skilful man of his time in the use of arms, aimed so surely at Inigo's visor, that had they both been standing still he could not have inflicted a steadier blow. The helmet flashed fire, the lance was shivered to within two arms' length of its rest, and the Spaniard reeled so much to the left side, where he had lost his stirrup, that he was well nigh dismounted. Bayard was considered to come off with most honour in this encounter.

The two knights proceeded in their course in order to come round again to the combat on the opposite sides of the barrier; and Inigo, throwing away the stump of his lance with a gesture of vexation, snatched up another. On the second encounter the blows were pronounced to be equal; but Inigo in his heart began to have doubts whether he was not indebted to the courtesy of the French chevalier, in declining

to use his utmost skill. In the third course this doubt became certainty: Inigo broke his lance on the visor of his antagonist, and Bayard merely grazed the side of the Spaniard's helmet with his weapon in passing, and it was but too plain that this failure was not involuntary.

Amidst the sound of trumpets and the acclamations of the multitude the heralds proclaimed the valour of the combatants to be equal, and the two knights rode side by side up to Donna Elvira's gallery to pay their respects to her. She received them with words of kindness and praise, as did Gonsalvo; and the Duke of Nemours said, "*Chevaliers! c'est bel et bon.*" Inigo was one of those characters which, however they may be conquered in other ways, will not allow themselves to be outdone in generosity. He therefore spoke openly of the courtesy used towards him by Bayard: but the latter, with that modesty which is the companion of true bravery, denied it resolutely, and said he had done his best. On this courteous strife arising, Gonsalvo addressed them in these words: "From your speech, cavaliers, it is possible that some doubt may arise which of you has tilted the best; but of one thing there can be no doubt, that there exist not in the world two knights more noble-minded and generous than yourselves."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE trumpets again sounded, and Correa appeared armed with a battle-axe and small round shield, to answer the challenge of Bayard, who had mounted a fresh horse, and was in other respects prepared for this second combat. The two antagonists moved towards each other, not however, as previously, urging their horses to their utmost speed, but, by means of rein and spur, keeping them in a canter until they almost met. In this sort of fight a rapid career was of no use, as in a course with the lance, to increase the impetus of the blows. They owed their chief effect to a vigorous arm, assisted by peculiar training and management of the horse, which was taught to rear up, and then, after a flying leap, to come down on his fore feet; the knight contrived to make his blow descend simultaneously with this latter movement of his charger, generally taking aim at his enemy's helmet; and when dexterously timed and vigorously executed, the effect of such a blow was tremendous, and almost impossible to be resisted. At the first encounter the excellently trained animals both rose and fell precisely at the same time, which prevented the knights from striking each other, so that guarding themselves with their shields they passed on. On their second meeting, the same thing occurred again. Bayard, having now made himself acquainted with his antagonist's pace and manner, started the third time with greater speed, and Correa was obliged to do so likewise; but when they approached each other, the French knight suddenly

brought his horse on its haunches, at the moment when his adversary, not expecting such a manœuvre, had made his animal rear up; the latter accordingly came down again without having dealt his intended blow. Bayard, with incredible rapidity, seized his opportunity, spurred on, raised his axe with both hands, and standing up in his stirrups, inflicted such a heavy perpendicular blow on the helmet of Correa, as made him bend down to the horse's neck, and immediately after, instead of righting himself, as the spectators expected, he rolled over on the ground completely stunned, and was borne out of the arena by his squires. Bayard, also, after saluting Donna Elvira's gallery as he passed under it, left the lists amid shouts of applause from the whole amphitheatre and notes of victory from the instruments. He was soon obliged to return, however, to a contest with Azevedo, who had come forward and offered to fulfill the terms of the challenge in the place of his companion. This combat continued for a long time with doubtful fortune; but in the end the French knight was adjudged to have come off with most honour.

Near the entrance, but outside of the lists, there was a place inclosed with palisades, and properly fitted up for the convenience of the combatants, their servants, and horses. Gonsalvo had taken care that everything should be provided that might be wanted. There were several tables to lay the armour on; a blacksmith with a portable forge and other implements, in case of its being required to mend any armour damaged in the strife; and lastly, there was a buttery or closet, well stored with eatables and wines. Brancalone had the charge of attending to

this department, and seeing that all necessary services should be offered to the champions. Whilst acting in this capacity, Grajano d'Asti, who was known to him from his having seen him when bearing the challenge in company with Fieramosca to the French camp, arrived with two squires, one carrying his armour and the other leading his battle-horse. Brancalcione had up to this moment, according to his general habit, scarcely spoken a word to any one, but he immediately went up to Grajano and received him with an unusually lengthy and courteous speech. Any one at all acquainted with Brancalcione's character, from observing his behaviour on this occasion must immediately have guessed that he had some hidden motive for being so talkative and amiable to the new comer; and he had in fact an important end in view, as we shall hereafter see.

The first greetings and offers of services being over, and having accommodated him with what he was likely to require, he detained him in conversation whilst the squires were assisting him to doff his splendid dress and put on the tight leather jerkin and hose which it was customary to wear under armour. Grajano's harness consisted of a remarkably beautiful suit of plate-armour striped with gold over the burnished steel, and was laid in pieces on the table. Brancalcione carefully examined it, piece by piece, and on taking up the breastplate to fit it on the knight, observed that it was composed of two plates of steel, rendering it completely impenetrable: the remainder of the front armour was also double, and of equal strength; and on lifting the armlets, cuirasses and greaves, and handling them like one

experienced in such matters, he pronounced them proof against any blow whatever. Whilst occupied in this criticism, a shrewd observer might have perceived an indescribably strange expression in his countenance and a peculiar twist of the mouth; but, as it happened, no one was looking at him at that moment. At last, it only remained to put on the helmet, and Brancalone, having handled it also, immediately discovered that it did not correspond in strength with the rest; he remarked to Grajano that he supposed he wore a steel skull-cap under it; but the other replying in the negative, he asked him the reason of his not taking precautions to defend his head, when he had provided himself with such complete armour for the rest of his body.

"Because," answered Grajano, "at the assault of a clumsy old castle, not worth four farthings, (and which that mad Duke of Montpensier had a whim in his head that he would take,) when I had just fixed a scaling-ladder against the wall, and was in the act of ascending, one of the rascally fellows from Abruzzi, employed in its defence, plumped a great heavy stone down upon my head, and descending edgeways it smashed my helmet, and made a hole in my head which will close when the earth is thrown over it for the last time, and not before. See here!" So saying, he took Brancalone's hand, and guiding it over his own head, made him feel with the finger a large notch in the skull, which completely explained to Brancalone the reason of Grajano's being unable to bear a heavier helmet. "Through this wound," continued the latter, "(Hang the man who gave it to me!) I have lost many a gold ducat; for it obliged

me to leave King Charles's service, and to remain several months in Rome whilst it was healing. "T is true," added he, laughing, "that my stay there was productive of some good as well as evil, for at that time I got rid of a wife of mine. I then agreed to enter the service of that wretch Valentinois; but now, thank Heaven! I have returned to the French, and with them at least you know what service you are on, and your conduct is appreciated; and then, at the end of every month, the florins are paid down as regularly as they are at the Bank of Martelli at Florence."

"But," remarked Brancaleone, "how would such a headpiece as this bear up against a heavy cutting blow?"

"Oh!" replied the other, "I do not give it a thought. In the first place it is made of the finest tempered Damascus steel to be had in the world; and then if in battle I perceive any one inclined to drive away the flies from my head, I put my shield in requisition in such a way that a man must be clever to reach me; look!" and he took up the shield, which was fastened by a brace to the neck, "you may see how I hold it, far enough off to leave my arm free."

Brancaleone said no more, but again examined the helmet, turning it over on all sides; and rapping it with his knuckles, made it ring in a manner quite his own: he then opened it, and himself fastened it on the knight's head.

Whilst this was passing, the combats had been fought between the three Spaniards and Bayard, as before narrated. The French chevalier having completed his victorious joust, arrived just as Grajano

was armed, and about to mount his charger. The latter addressed some courteous words to the conqueror, and seeing that Brancaleone was not noticing them, inquired which was the best man amongst the Spanish champions. Bayard, taking off his gauntlets and helmet, laid them on the table, and wiping the perspiration from his brow, said, "D. Inigo de Ayala, *bonne lance, foi de chevalier*." He likewise bestowed the due meed of praise on the other two knights: he then gave the warrior who was about to compete with them a few practical hints, which were not lost upon him.

Grajano entered the arena in gallant style, mounted on a murrey horse enveloped in orange-coloured housings, and the herald announced his name in a loud voice; after which the knight rode up to the front of Gonsalvo's gallery, and with his lance struck three times the shields of Azevedo and Inigo. Fieramosca shuddered when he heard Grajano's name pronounced: he felt double remorse at having concealed from Ginevra the fact of her husband being alive; and like a man who is the more ready to form good resolutions the more remote the opportunity of executing them is, he determined anew to disclose everything to her on the very first opportunity.

In the mean time the contest began; and the Piedmontese knight, who was a man of first-rate strength and skill in arms, obtained decisive advantages over Azevedo, but without unhorsing him; and even in the combat with Inigo, he bore himself in such a gallant manner that the judgement was pronounced in favour of him. After Grajano, several French cavaliers tried their skill; amongst the rest, De la Palisse,

Chandenier, Aubigny ; and La Motte, who was vexed at the quarrel he had had with Diego Garcia respecting the bull-fight, that day did wonders. To tell the truth, the three Spaniards who had undertaken to be champions of the field had the worst of the tourney ; it was plain that for those three alone to place themselves against the best warriors of the French army was an enterprise beyond their abilities. Inigo and Azevedo, however, still remained in their saddles ; and Grajano, who had already jousted with them, moved against them once more. The weariness they felt from having kept up the combat so long assisted him perhaps materially ; but however that might be, to him belonged the honour of finishing the tournament, by unhorsing them both, one after another, and he was accordingly declared victor of the joust. He received from the hands of Donna Elvira the rich helmet before described, as the reward of victory, amid the sounds of instruments and general acclamations.

The tournament being concluded, Gonsalvo arose, and accompanied by his daughter, the French Commander, the barons and suite, returned to the citadel, where, the hour of the banquet approaching, preparations were going on for well furnishing the tables. The amphitheatre and square were soon deserted by all the spectators, both strangers and townspeople, some going to their homes and some to the hostelryes (particularly to Veleno's, which was considered one of the most comfortable,) in order to rest themselves and dine, and discuss the interesting occurrences at the joust.

Ginevra, on the morning of this day, in which

Fortune was preparing for her such dreadful trials, awoke an hour later than usual. More than ever overwhelmed with dismal thoughts and anticipations, she had not succeeded until near daybreak in obtaining a minute's sleep, and then it was disturbed with the most fantastic and troublesome dreams. Now she saw Fieramosca mortally wounded, the glaze of death on his eye, about to bid her adieu for ever; now she beheld him victorious, surrounded with glory, applauded by the knights, but looking contemptuously on her, and turning to offer his hand to another damsel. Even in her sleep she comforted herself with thinking, 'Happy me! that this is but a dream!' but again she was troubled, when she dreamed that she even heard the noise of the festivities accompanying Hector's nuptials, the bells, and the discharge of artillery; and at last the thunder of the latter so startled her ear that it woke her: she opened her eyes, and directing her gaze to the balcony, from which Barletta might be seen, she discovered that even if all the rest were a dream, the roar of cannon which she had heard was certainly reality. She sat up in bed, and drawing from under the counterpane an elegantly rounded little foot, as white as milk, she hid it in a crimson velvet slipper, and proceeded with her toilette, parting with both hands her long auburn tresses behind the ears, and throwing over her under-garments a loose robe of blue silk. She then took her seat on the vine-covered balcony, and shading her eyes from the brightness of a clear and brilliant sunshine, she admired the majestic picture that presented itself to her sight.

The orb of day, already risen above the horizon

two hours previously, illumined the whole extent of the coast, the town, and the citadel. From between the red towers and battlements of the latter came out suddenly, from time to time, globules of smoke as white as pearls, traversed by forked tongues of flame; and the white smoke, shining brightly in the sun's rays, and rolling into a thousand fantastic and elegant forms, at length ascended, spread itself out, and finally vanished in the azure heaven. A few instants, and the booming report reached the islet of St. Ursula, and then given back by the waves was heard again amongst the rocks on the shore, till it was lost in a distant echo amongst the ravines of the mountains. The citadel and town, before veiled by the smoke, which was soon dissipated by the sea-breeze, were mirrored in the calm blue wave so plainly, that their reversed image was reproduced entire, though tremulous, on the waters.

The sounds of bells and martial instruments came along upon the wind, now loudly, now faintly; and in the stillness pervading the convent, it was even possible to distinguish at times the cries and shouts of the populace accompanying the Spanish Commander with acclamations. But neither these marks of joy and festivity, nor the smiling picture of nature beneath her gaze, availed to relieve Ginevra's mind from the sorrow and sadness that oppressed it. To the sting of remorse another equally terrible had been added, the fearful suspicion of being forsaken by that man for whose sake she had made the immense sacrifice of disobedience to the voice of duty and conscience. It was a doubt which her mind repelled and her heart abhorred; nevertheless the

doubt had arisen : let any experienced person say if it be an easy thing to remove such a feeling. And in truth, even if entirely false, several circumstances had arisen which might well give it the guise of truth. Hector had certainly concealed from her his meeting with Grajano ; but accustomed as he was to open his whole mind to her, he did not succeed in dissembling well enough to prevent her discovering that some secret lurked in his heart with which he did not wish to acquaint her. Then, again, the entire change in Zoraide's behaviour towards her was as a thorn which she was unable to pluck from her bosom ; and she thought to herself, 'Who will assure me that Hector has not observed this also ? Who will assure me that he is indifferent to it ?' And when from this sort of reasoning she endeavoured to deduce consequences, she involved herself in a labyrinth of doubts, without finding any clue to extricate herself.

Uneasy and wearied with these anxieties, she rose up, and sought some one to converse with her and distract her thoughts : she even sought Zoraide. On going into the house, Zoraide was not to be found ; she descended into the garden,—Zoraide was not there ; she inquired for her of the few remaining at the convent, and no one knew where she was. She felt a severe pang at her heart, and a thousand undefinable suspicions again crowded on her mind. In making this search she had arrived near the tower which defended the approach to the island. It was entirely abandoned ; not a man was left on guard : all the soldiers, after the departure of the Commandant, one after another, had taken themselves off, to go and

enjoy the festivities. She passed along the bridge, and walked for a considerable space along the shore, having the sea on her right hand, and the mountain side, thickly covered with underwood, on her left. She sauntered slowly, her mind weighed down too much with heavy thoughts to permit her to observe what was passing around her. She was all at once startled by a noise amongst the bushes, and, to her great alarm, a man rushed out from them, staggering with weakness, covered with bloody rags torn to tatters by the brambles, and with long matted hair hanging over his face, and threw himself on his knees at her feet. Her first impulse was to fly; but on second thoughts, like a brave and spirited woman, she remained; and after regarding the being who had appeared so strangely before her, she by degrees recognised in him the brigand chief Pietraccio, whose escape she and Fieramosca, by the cunning contrivance of Don Michael, had aided in effecting. The affair had turned out exactly as the Duke's *employé* had foreseen: Pietraccio, whilst the two were ascertaining whether they could afford any assistance or comfort to the female prisoner, had rushed past them up the steps, and then through the gateway; and having disengaged himself with his dagger from those who attempted to stop him, though wounded and pursued by many, yet by taking his course through the brushwood, where his agility and acquaintance with the localities stood him in good stead, he eventually succeeded in saving himself. To avoid falling into the hands of his pursuers, he had been obliged to lie concealed in the thickest parts of the wood, suffering the greatest privations; and now finding himself ac-

cidentally near to her whom he could not be afraid of, supposing her, as he did, to have been the cause of his liberation, and urged by misery and hunger, he threw himself upon her protection, making her understand by signs, what was too evidently proved by his appearance, his perfect wretchedness. Ginevra shuddered with horror and pity for this unfortunate creature, and told him that she believed there was no one in the convent beside the nuns; that the tower not being guarded, he might return with her and conceal himself in a wood-cellar under her cottage, where she would supply him with refreshment. The murderer, who would have met death rather than endure a continuance of the life he had lately been leading, followed her, and arrived at his hiding-place without having been seen. He was soon visited by the compassionate lady, who brought some food for him, bandaged his wounds, which though slight required attention, and procured him a little straw to sleep on. Ginevra, on her way back to her apartments, met with Zoraide and Gennaro, who had just returned from Barletta. She could not refrain from giving a playful reproach to her young friend for having left her without saying a word of her intentions.

“My Zoraide! you have caused me enough anxiety: I could not find you anywhere on the island. Why not tell me that you were going?”

“Not to awaken you,” replied Zoraide; and the want of sincerity in this answer tinged her cheeks with a blush of shame, which did not escape Ginevra’s eyes. She then added, “I went away in good time with Gennaro, for—”

"And," interrupted Ginevra with a smile, "did you not know yesterday evening that you intended to go and see the jousting?"

This direct question added a blush of vexation to Zoraide's countenance, and she answered quickly, "Yes, I had a sort of notion—" (then taking up the thread of her former speech)—"I had long wished to see one of these jousts, that I might be able to judge whether they really were so very superior to the amusements of the Arabs. But, Allah be praised! amongst *us* we should make our slaves do what your knights and gentlemen do here; for none of our chiefs would expose his life for the diversion of an assembly of three or four thousand of the lowest rabble."

Ginevra, perceiving that Zoraide put forward the topic of the tournament to avoid having to give any further explanations respecting her unceremonious departure, did not press the matter further, but said, "After all, has it not been a beautiful tourney?"

"Beautiful! aye, that it has!" exclaimed Genaro, who was dying with the desire of giving a history of the whole affair, and forthwith commenced with the setting out of Gonsalvo, describing as well as he could the richness and magnificence of the barons and knights in their costumes and equipments. Then, having got the idea into his head that he had something to tell her which would certainly please, he shook his head knowingly, compressed his lips, and with both hands twirled and twisted his cap in a hundred odd ways and into a hundred odd shapes, and said, "Ah! if you had but seen your brother, how he sat on that beautiful young horse as white as

silver, and everybody crying out, 'Oh! what a handsome young man!' And, to tell the truth, with that blue mantle of yours he certainly was a picture. I was nearly suffocated in the crowd in trying to follow the cavalcade beyond the gates! it required some good hard blows with my elbows, I can tell you. Yes!—but when Signor Gonsalvo's daughter got down from the litter, I was as near to her as I am to you; and then Signor Hector placed her on horseback—or rather, that is, she rested one foot on his knee; a pretty little foot, about this size: look!—(and to describe it, he marked out the size of his right thumb, by taking hold of its lower joint with his left hand)—and up she went as nimbly as a grasshopper. And you may believe me, she did not dislike your brother's looks; for when she was fairly in the saddle, she said something sweet to him, and gave him such a smile! Happy the man who saw it! and he—he turned quite red. God knows what she said to him. Thinks I to myself, depend upon it Signor Hector will now begin to think of marrying; and a handsome couple they'd make: they seem made for one another."

Let the reader judge of the effect of this narrative and the accompanying remarks upon Ginevra. Unable to support them any longer, she said hastily, "Yes! yes! you shall tell me all about it some other time," and turned to go with Zoraide to their chambers; but Gennaro, who was primed for a long speech, would not leave off, and continued, "Oh! but that was nothing at all! You should have seen them during the jousting, in Gonsalvo's gallery. He was seated close beside her the whole time, and they did

nothing but talk together ; and then—listen here, my lady,—Zoraide can tell you whether every one did not observe them. And more than this, there was the landlord of the Sun, who furnishes the castle with wine, and he said that her father has consented that she shall marry him. It would be a fine affair, would it not? What thousands of ducats! Very different from tiring out his life on horseback, exposed to wind and rain!”

Ginevra, as the only way to put an end to these remarks, which were becoming far too painful, although they might in themselves be rather ridiculous, said, “ But the tournament ; when am I to hear anything about the tournament?”

“ Oh! as for the joust, there never was known such a one in Barletta before.” And here he began with the bull-fights, then went on to the brave feats performed by Diego Garcia, and afterwards gave a description of the combats with axe and lance, repeating the names of all the knights proclaimed by the heralds : his memory was only too good. On winding up he said, “ The man that finished the joust, by unhorsing the three Spaniards one after another, was Signor Don Grajano D’Asti—”

“ Who? who?” cried Ginevra, with a change in voice and manner impossible to be concealed.

“ One Signor Don Grajano D’Asti. He must be a great baron, for his armour and clothes are worth a mint of money.”

“ Grajano D’Asti, did you say? Tall? short? young? what was he like?”

Gennaro had not lost a single shade of the arms, appearance, and physiognomy of any one of the

combatants, and recollected perfectly Grajano's face, for that knight had openly shown his countenance on riding into the lists with his visor up; so that Gennaro was able to describe him so minutely as not to leave the slightest doubt in the unhappy lady's mind as to its being her husband. She had, nevertheless, sufficient presence of mind left to conceal in part the tumult which was raging in her bosom, and to recollect that it was of the utmost importance to prevent her secret being discovered. During the time occupied by Gennaro in describing to her minutely the form and features of the Baron, she had leisure to collect herself in some degree; and perceiving that her two listeners had noticed the shock she had received on hearing that fatal name pronounced, she endeavoured to obliterate their suspicions by saying, when the gardener concluded, "You need not be astonished at my being disturbed at the name of that man. At one time very strange and disagreeable affairs happened between his family and mine: they were afterwards settled, and all cause of offence has been removed for some years past; but I never dreamed of his being at this hour in Barletta, and in the French service."

Having said these words she went away towards her apartments. Zoraide and Gennaro could not avoid seeing, from her frequently changing colour, that some hidden thought of serious importance was sorely troubling her, and accordingly remained where they were, not to intrude upon her sorrow by following her; but when she was out of hearing, the gardener said to Zoraide, "What is it that she has taken

so much to heart? Have I told her anything that is not good news?"

Zoraide had some suspicions, though she could hardly define them; and answering merely with a shrug of the shoulders, she went away too, desiring no less than Ginevra to be alone. Gennaro, left standing where he was with cap in hand, proceeded to his usual occupations, grumbling out, "They are all of one sort. He must be a clever fellow who can understand them."

Meanwhile poor Ginevra ascended the staircase leading to her chamber; but at every step she mounted she seemed to have the world weighing upon her: her breathing became thick and rapid, and her heart beat so violently that she was on the point of fainting. She continually repeated in a whisper, "Holy Virgin, help me!" until, her distress increasing, she could utter only "*Mio Dio! Mio Dio!*" and at last the oppression became so intolerable that she felt her knees fail her, and she sank down helplessly on the fourth step, which she had with difficulty reached. Her respiration was quicker and more interrupted, and her fair forehead moist with cold perspiration; and she thought to herself, "I shall not survive tomorrow!" Although she had heard Zoraide go to her own chamber, and shut herself in, and knew that in those hot hours of the afternoon the nuns retired to repose in their cells, yet the idea of the possibility of being found there in such a condition was painful to her in the extreme. To avoid the very risk of it, therefore, having laid aside all hope of going up into her own apartment, she de-

terminated instead to go through the wicket of the cloister into the church, where alone she felt that she ought now to seek aid and defence against the evils which threatened her. She accordingly tottered along as well as her feebleness would permit her, sometimes leaning against the wall for support, and at others making a strong effort to walk in her usual manner, whenever she happened to see some lay-sister in the alleys of the garden, or a nun peeping from any of the windows.

There was no one in the church. She sat down on the upper step leading into the choir, which was near her, and remained there a considerable time, leaning her head on her hands, and her elbows resting on her knees: she endeavoured to rally her spirits, for her mind was so confused with innumerable conflicting thoughts that she was unable to command any one of them.

Behind the great altar there was a descent of eight or ten marble steps into a small vaulted chapel, where five silver lamps were kept burning day and night before an image of the Virgin Mary, painted on the wall (according to general belief) by St. Luke. The miracles which, according to tradition, had been worked in this place, had been the original cause of the erection of the adjoining church and convent. This little chapel was of an hexagonal form, and the altar and image were immediately opposite to the marble staircase; at each angle there was a column, its capital ornamented with leaf-work in the old style, and each column supported one of the groins which met at the centre of the roof, and were joined together by a large round keystone, perforated with an iron

grate, through which you could see up into that part of the church before the steps of the great altar. A scanty ray of light, entering through the coloured glass of one of the upper windows of the church, made its way through this aperture into the subterranean chapel. Amid the darkness, scarcely dissipated by the faint reddish light of the lamps, the ray shone out very plainly, forming a bright beam as it fell upon the pavement, and showed in varied hues the form of the grated aperture. Ginevra went hurriedly forwards to throw herself on her knees before the altar, and in crossing this ray, the light reflected from her blue vest flashed out suddenly, and for a moment, meteor-like, illumined the chapel.

She commenced her prayer with hands clasped firmly on her bosom and eyes intently fixed on that holy painting, and little by little she felt the palpitation of her heart diminish, and her panting breath become more quiet and regular. Her prayers, though not distinctly expressed in words, issued from her heart and affections, and by degrees restored her to comparative tranquillity. As in most old paintings, the countenance of the Madonna before her was expressive of a certain divine and noble sadness, which gave to the wretched lady an idea that it felt compassion for her agony; and after long and fixedly gazing at it, she could almost fancy she perceived a brilliancy in the eyes which filled her with holy terror, but at the same time partly consoled her. "Holy and glorious Virgin!" at length said she with great emotion, "what am I that I should deserve thy pity? and yet who will help me if thou dost not?

Behold my griefs at thy feet : thou seest that I am unable to support this trial, am too weak to bear myself out of it with safety. O merciful Virgin ! inspire me with strength that I may be able to do that which my heart would fain dictate." With her eyes still fixed on the image, and her tears flowing down and bathing her cheeks and bosom, she remained a long while in this position, as if placing herself under the protection of her whom she regarded as the mother and comforter of the afflicted ; and she soon felt by experience of what inestimable value to one who on earth has lost everything, even hope, is the privilege of turning the thoughts and prayers to heaven.

The days of her past life all crowded back upon her memory ; the innocent joys of childhood, the affections of youth, the first words of love breathed into her ear, the first remorse felt, then all the confused heap of troubles and afflictions that had come upon her since her marriage. She thought upon what the few last years had been,—a continual vicissitude of rare and scanty joys (and these perhaps not pure), mingled with abundance of bitterness and stinging repentance : and now, to crown her woes, one of the few comforts that she had nourished in her breast, her confidence up to that time in Hector's fidelity, was seen to vanish, like a long dream to one awakened. And when, deeply smitten by such an accumulation of woes she was almost disposed to follow the will of God, but yet seemed unable to come to the resolution, she fancied she heard the voice of God speak aloud to her, and place her, as it were by force, on the road she ought to tread, by bringing

about this unexpected discovery of her husband. "Every doubt," thought she, "is now removed. As long as I could believe he was not alive, there might be some faint excuse for me; but now, how can I, miserable wretch that I am, defend myself in living on in this manner?" Here a new, unthought-of obstacle rose in opposition to her intentions. "And when I present myself to him, and he asks me, Where have you been during this long interval?" It was no easy thing for her to imagine a reply. Struck with this idea, she felt it so absolutely impossible to resolve upon encountering the looks of her husband, that she gave up this project and attempted to discover some other way of extricating herself from this labyrinth. But the longer she thought, the more she was convinced that the step she felt so much repugnance at taking was precisely the very one that she must and ought to take; and she said to herself, "For whom shall I have to grieve? For myself. If I had conducted myself otherwise, as I ought to have done, I should not have had to endure this bitter humiliation; and the longer I delay it, the more bitter will it become." Ginevra possessed a mind of strong temperament, and one that could not brook irresolution long continued; she therefore proceeded boldly: "Can I endure this everlasting remorse? No. Can I refuse the hopes and forget the terrors of another life? No. Then will I do my duty, and think of that alone. The anguish which I encounter may be, perchance, an expiation of my sins: and thou, Divine Mother, wilt have compassion on me in this world and the next! Should Grajano not forgive me, what is the worst that he can do? Murder me! My im-

mortal spirit will then fly into the presence of its Maker, and will be able to offer the fruits of repentance, and hope for pity and pardon."

After one last and earnest prayer she re-ascended into the church, and passed on with a quick and firm step, as if to assist her in sustaining her courage, and proceeded to shut herself into her chamber and to consider the best mode of putting her plan in execution. She took her usual seat upon the balcony looking towards Barletta, and began to muse deeply. She could not think of a day more suitable than that one for returning without obstacle to her husband, being certain of finding him amidst the festivities in the citadel of Barletta, where she might arrive by water in less than half an hour, should no unforeseen circumstance occur to prevent. If, on the contrary, she delayed until he returned to the French camp, the difficulties would be doubled. She therefore said to herself, 'I must not allow myself to doubt: before tomorrow I must be with him. But how to explain to Hector? He will certainly not come here today: and to wait?—I cannot. To leave the island, to abandon him, and he not to know what has become of me,—after all, even to my life, that I owe him!' Here a thought rose up before her worthy of a soul like hers: 'If in leaving him I allow him to know the state of my heart towards him on taking this step—I know him too well—he will no longer enjoy a moment's happiness whilst he lives: if, on the other hand, I go without explaining the reason, he will think that I have been ungrateful; but the recollection of me as a wretch, an ingrate, will soon be obliterated from his mind—.' She could not sup-

port this idea, but exclaimed in agony, "My sins have been great, but this punishment is too horrible!"

She arose, and wiping away her tears with her hand, she proceeded to get ready such few articles as she thought necessary to take with her, in that restless and hurried manner generally seen in persons who have just experienced a heavy mental shock. In searching a drawer her hands met with some remnants of the materials which had been used in making Fieramosca's blue mantle, and of the silver thread with which it had been embroidered. The reader may imagine how this sight affected Ginevra. Her first impulse was to take them with her; but she soon replaced them, saying, "No; every thought of him must be cancelled for ever. To know that he is happy as far as respects me, is all I must hope for here below." She wrote to the Abbess, thanking her sincerely but briefly for her hospitality and protection, and recommending her young friend to her care: she informed her that a serious and weighty motive obliged her to depart without taking formal leave, and that she had hopes that at no very distant time she might be in such a situation as would enable her to send fuller accounts of her circumstances.

Having completed this last duty, nothing more remained to be done at the convent; but she did not intend to leave it till the evening. There still remained about one hour of daylight, and she determined to wait patiently for the dusk, seated in the balcony. There could not have been a more painful mode of passing this interval: if she looked into the interior of her apartment, the sight of that little

packet laid on the table, which was to accompany her in her dreary expedition, anticipated in a manner the uneasiness of it; if she directed a glance at her bed, which had been made as usual by the lay sister, she recollected that she had reposed in it the preceding evening for the last time, and Heaven only knew where she should sleep on the coming night! Out on the balcony it was still worse: she saw the tract of sea which separated her from the citadel of Barletta, and called to mind the many occasions on which she had strained her eyes to discover, like a dark speck upon the waters, the little boat rowed by Fieramosca. She had now to traverse that space in order to go—where?

CHAPTER XIV.

WHILST Ginevra was suffering this anguish of waiting for and dreading the approaching night, Pietraccio, in his hiding-place in the wood-cellar under her apartments, expected her with impatience and some doubt, hoping that she would have come that evening to instruct him in effecting his escape without being detected. The window of the cellar admitted a scanty light from the upper part of the wall, but outside it was very little elevated above the surface of the ground, and looked out into a solitary part of the back of the convent, which was covered so luxuriantly with brambles and nettles that it seemed almost impossible for a person to make his way there. The robber was alarmed at hearing steps approaching

amongst those bushes and plants, and his fear was increased on seeing a man, whom he immediately recognised, come up and stop near the window. It was the Commandant of the tower. He was strongly inclined to conceal his person beneath the bundles of fagots lying in the cellar, but the dread lest he should be betrayed by the rustling of the dry leaves kept him in his original position, where he remained so still as even to restrain his breathing, and could hear distinctly every word that passed between Martin and some one with him.

"There it is," said Martin; "that window on the first floor, where there is a birdcage and a vase of flowers: you see that even without a ladder you can climb up there without difficulty. Well, when you are up, you will find your way into a passage with a number of doors; but remember that the first door on the left hand is the one belonging to the lady's apartment. There is no one besides her at present in the strangers' house. At the first hour of night all the nuns are in bed: if you manage well you can come at the third hour, and may carry away the lady and be a mile on the sea before any one finds out what has happened. I'll lock up the dogs. As for my men, I have given them furlough today, and whoever wants them may seek them in the taverns at Barletta. So now I have done my part of the business; but take care, and tell your rascally comrade to mind his own affairs, and that I have no intention of losing the pay I get from the Abbess just for these few florins: therefore he must act with judgement, for if the matter should prove a failure, I have already thought of a mode of casting

all the blame on him, and of coming off safe myself. Short reckonings make long friends."

Boscherino, to whom this had been addressed, slightly twitching the end of the Commandant's mustachio, and shaking his head, shrewdly replied, "To cast the blame and consequences on the leader of this enterprise would be a little beyond your abilities. Thank Saint Martin that the castle of Barletta is at such a distance from you, and that a certain personage there has not heard you, or he would soon make you sing to another tune. Listen, friend: of the whole of this business, whether it succeed or fail, the less you talk the better for you."

Martin, who had been doing justice to the banquet given by Gonsalvo at Barletta, and who had drunk there to a degree that made him feel quite lion-hearted, replied without any alarm, "And I will say it again, that I am not afraid of a man in this world; and if I have been induced to do you this service, I have only done it because soldiers are accustomed to help each other in these matters, and not for the sake of a few ducats; and I am determined not to break my neck or lose my bread for any one whom I don't know. So I tell you plainly, act prudently, for if you are discovered, I know how to exculpate myself; and as to the leader of this enterprise, whoever he may be, when I am in my tower I can laugh at him. Now we understand each other. Farewell."

Having said this he returned to the tower, allowing Boscherino to remain awhile to examine well the localities: the latter let him go a short distance, *looking after him with a smile of compassion, and*

then could not avoid saying to himself, but loud enough for Pietraccio to hear, "Poor ass! beware of quarrelling with Cæsar Borgia! you drink Alicant wine now, but you would soon find that he would quench your thirst with salt bacon!"

These latter words, no less than the preceding dialogue, had been listened to with earnest attention by the brigand, and he sufficiently comprehended them to be convinced that there was a plot brewing, with the Duke Valentino at its head, to carry off his protectress, and that Valentino was at that moment in the citadel of Barletta. We may suppose, without wronging Pietraccio, that the purpose of defending the lady was not his first thought; for what could such a being as he know of gratitude? But the hope of being able to defeat a scheme of the greatest enemy of his mother and himself, and another hope more atrocious, of being able by some chance to fall in with him amidst the crowd and confusion of the fête and murder him, made his blood warm with joy; and when Boscherino after a while had gone away, he started up from his hiding-hole, and drawing from his bosom the long sharp dagger given him by Don Michael, he tried its point with the end of his finger, and then grinding his teeth together, he stood in the attitude of one about to inflict a backhanded blow. He then began to consider some mode of getting safely to Barletta.

The convent bell sounded the *Ave Maria*. After waiting half an hour longer, he went up out of the cellar very cautiously, opened the door softly, and peeping in all directions, saw that the whole esplanade was clear of human beings; but to arrive at

the main land he durst not pass either under the tower or along the bridge; and knowing that the branch of the sea between the island and the coast would be the safest way for him, (the distance was about a hundred yards,) he descended by the stone steps to the water's edge; then undressing himself, tying his scanty clothes into a small bundle and fastening it on his head, he swam off, and arrived after a few minutes on the sandy shore, without having been seen or heard by any one. It was almost dark, so that without being open to suspicion he dressed himself, and set off at a rapid pace for the town.

But to return to the affairs at Barletta. Diego García di Paredes had scarcely settled the dispute which his admirable combat with the bull had given rise to between him and the French knights, when he recollected that a charge of great importance had been committed to him by Gonsalvo, and left the amphitheatre in great haste: this charge was, to have an eye to the preparations for the magnificent banquet about to be given at the castle. As time pressed, he soon arrived at the kitchens, and, having still fresh within him the vexation caused by La Motte's taunting words, his appearance amongst the cooks and servants who were busied in preparing the viands was that of a man by no means disposed to pass over a single fault or piece of negligence in those under his command. "And so," said he, stopping in the doorway with folded arms, "we shall be ready in time, shall we? and it wants rather less than an hour to the time when we sit down to table!"

The head cook, a fat bulky man, was standing at a clumsy table, in the act of putting some venison

on a spit, with that surly expression of countenance common to all his fraternity in such situations, even when things are going right; but he had especial reason for being surly: there was a deficiency of fuel, and such a deficiency, that besides the danger of his cooking being spoilt by his inability to keep up an even degree of heat, there was the still greater one of not having the dinner ready at the appointed hour, and not sending it to table at all, either well dressed or otherwise. He who knows how jealous a cook is of his honour, may picture the state of mind of this man when the Spaniard addressed the question to him. He would not at that moment have answered the Pope; but it was necessary to answer Paredes. He raised his head and brandished the spit, and said, "The Devil has poked his horns in here, Signor Don Diego; and that traitor of a *mayordomo* has left me without fuel! I have sent away as many of the varlets as I could spare, to find some where they can; but whether they are dead or not I don't know, for not one of them has come back." He finished these words with a great sigh or rather roar, and it was evident the effort of speech had cost him much.

"Wood or no wood," exclaimed the Spaniard, "*voto á Dios* if you are not ready at the time fixed—*Majadero, harto de ajos*—" and he went on with a long string of abusive epithets and vows, addressed in Spanish to the cook, who could not hear it all without replying. "Oh, oh! Your Excellency! only tell me how I am to cook meat without a fire."

Diego Garcia was not a strong bully who is only the more angry with a weak man because he is in

the right; and although the cook's remark teased him a little at first, he felt that it was just, and said, "And this villain of a *majordomo*, where has he taken himself?" and without waiting for an answer, he turned short round, went up again into the court-yard, and bawled out in a voice of thunder, "Izquierdo! Izquierdo! *Maldito de Dios!*"

Izquierdo had run off to the nearest fagot-pile, and having, with the assistance of some of the scullions loaded a few asses with the wood, was driving them along, cudgelling them all the while cruelly, and entered the court-yard just as he heard a voice calling him; he forthwith redoubled his blows, in order to shift part of the guilt of delay on his poor asses; as if the unfortunate animals had anything to do with it!

Coming up to Paredes, he began to make excuses, but Paredes interrupted him with, "Get on! quick! none of your nonsensical chattering; down with those fagots, or I will make you feel them on your back!"

In order to pass from the court-yard to the kitchen there was first of all an ascent of three steps, then a dark passage, and at the end of this a little court, with a sort of pit or area sunk in the middle of it, walled round, and with a narrow winding flight of steps attached to its sides leading down to the kitchen. Garcia stamped with impatience when he saw the delay and trouble that was likely to be occasioned if the wood was carried down piecemeal in this way; and the business going on according to his notions far too slowly, he worked himself into a passion, stooped down, placed his shoulders under the belly

of one of the asses, seized its fore legs with one hand, and its hind legs with the other, as if it had been a kid, raised the beast and its burden both together off the ground, carried them to the brink of the area, and flung them down below in a heap, the fagots upwards and the ass beneath, with its legs in the air. Returning again with the same fury, he played a similar game with a second and a third ass ; so that in a short time there might be seen down this hole, which was not very large, a great heap of fagots with the donkeys' noses, ears and legs intermingled, the poor animals bruised and wounded, and kicking furiously, whilst the scullion-boys, in no little fright, were endeavouring to extricate them and fling their loads of fuel into the kitchen. The fear of Diego Garcia affected even the head cook, who came out himself to render assistance, looking up however from time to time to see whether the shower of asses was likely to continue, in order to keep his head out of danger. In the twinkling of an eye the fireplaces were filled with fuel, and the impulse given by this strange conduct of Paredes was such that each man did as much as three. As soon as he saw that affairs had taken a promising appearance, shaking himself and beating off the dust about him, and growling perpetually, he proceeded on his way to his house in order to dress for the banquet, and found the courtyard of the castle full of the company just returned from the tournament. Gonsalvo, the Duke of Nemours, the ladies and the knights arrived precisely in time to see the last of the asses upon Garcia's shoulders ; and hearing how matters stood, all began laughing and joking, but made way for the

Spanish baron. They then ascended into the suites of apartments prepared for the fête, and awaited the hour of the banquet.

In the entrance-hall leading to Gonsalvo's presence-chamber, about a hundred feet in length, there was placed a large table in the horseshoe form, occupying three sides of the apartment, and it might accommodate about three hundred guests. At the circular end of the table, which was at the extremity furthest from the entrance, were four elevated seats covered with velvet, and gold fringe, for the Duke of Nemours, Gonsalvo, Donna Elvira, and Vittoria Colonna. From the wall immediately above them waved the standard of Spain, the banners of the Colonna family, and the knights' pennons, intermingled with trophies formed of rich and highly polished armour, gracefully plumed helmets, and numerous costly and magnificent jewelled ornaments. Through apertures left in the table, which was sufficiently wide for the purpose, issued at equal distances orange trees, myrtles and young palms laden with their fruit, blossoms and flowers; and fresh limpid water, conducted through small tubes, bubbled up under their shade, and fell into silver vases, in which were gliding fish of all colours. Little birds fluttered amongst the green branches of these shrubs: it is true they were confined, but in such an ingenious manner by horsehair bonds, as to make it invisible; and having been domesticated in cages, they warbled their sweet songs without being alarmed by the sight or noise of the company. At the extremity opposite the places destined for the chief guests was a spacious *buffet*, covered with dishes and plates of precious metal

worked in *relievo* after arabesque designs; and in front of this, in the midst, there was a raised seat, where the steward of the household was to take his station, and with his ebony wand direct the movements of servants and attendants. Between the two sides of the horseshoe, and on the ground, were two immense urns, or rather reservoirs of brass, filled with water for the operation of rinsing and washing, similar in appearance to those painted by Paul Veronese in his 'Suppers'; and within their recesses were also coolers and decanters of Spanish and Sicilian wines: on either side of the hall were erected galleries for the musicians.

Thanks to Diego Garcia's care and the cook's exertions, shortly after midday the steward of the household entered the suite of apartments where the company were waiting, followed by fifty grooms of the chamber in red-and-yellow livery, with napkins, basons and ewers for washing hands, to announce that the banquet was on the table. The Duke of Nemours, beaming with youth and health, with that grace so peculiar to the French nation, offered his hand to Donna Elvira to conduct her to her seat. Who would have said at that moment to this young prince, whose future prospects seemed so fortunate and glorious, that within a few short days those eyes so sparkling and those active limbs would be motionless and cold, extended on a wretched bier in the little church of Cerignola, and that this brief kindness of his enemy Gonsalvo would be the last affection that he would excite in a living breast!*

* The Duke of Nemours was killed at the battle of Cerignola.
—*Author's Note.*

Gonsalvo, having taken his seat between Vittoria Colonna and the Duke, placed at the right hand of the latter his daughter, who had on her other side Hector Fieramosca; and the banquet forthwith commenced. Fieramosca's courteous attentions during the whole of the morning had been such, that the Spanish maiden, with her warm and affectionate disposition, could not avoid being favourably impressed with him, more especially when she heard that he was so much valued and praised by all his companions. Sitting next to one another at table, they resumed their pleasant-ries and interesting conversations; but every now and then a cloud passed over the brow of the Italian; his answers were less ready, and sometimes had little to do with the subject of discourse. Donna Elvira slily glanced at him, half doubtful, half impatient; and seeing that he became paler, and casting down his eyes appeared anxious and perplexed, she was inclined to suspect that she was the cause of this change. Such a thought as this rendered her indulgent towards him, so that she also ceased talking, and both remained for some time silent amidst the noisy enjoyment of the rest of the company. But poor Elvira deceived herself sadly; the cause of Fieramosca's suddenly troubled appearance was widely different from the one just mentioned, and arose from an accidental combination of circumstances. From the place where he sat, which was immediately opposite the large windows of the hall, then opened on account of the heat, he looked out upon the wide expanse of the sea, and saw Mount Gargano, clothed with that beautiful blue tint which mountains usually take in the clear and serene air of noon. He beheld the little

island and convent of St. Ursula rising out of the bosom of the waters, and could even distinguish, like a dark spot upon the sunlit front of the strangers' cottage, Ginevra's favourite balcony shaded by the vine. From the pure colouring of this picture he saw standing out, in strong relief, the dark form of Grajano, who was seated between him and the window. This contrast with the clear sky made his complexion appear redder and more inflamed than usual, and increased the harshness of his unpleasing physiognomy. Fieramosca was in utter anguish when he thought on the man who was before him. It was well for him that he was unaware of the much greater agony that Ginevra was then enduring; for exactly at this time it was that, having heard from Gennaro that Grajano was in Barletta, she descended into the church, and came to the firm determination of abandoning the spot for ever.

In the uproar and confusion of such a numerous tableful little or no attention was paid to Hector and Donna Elvira: but Vittoria Colonna, in whom suspicion had already arisen, remarked the changed countenances of the two young people; and fearing that matters had come to a more serious crisis with them, she kept a strict and vigilant watch upon the movements of the knight and her friend, for whom she could not do otherwise than tremble. Whilst these three personages remained in this position, the banquet had been proceeding, offering to the guests a profuseness and variety of viands customary in those times. If the culinary art is one of difficulty at the present day, it was perhaps more so at that period, when the cook, on an occasion like this, had more

trials to undergo than we have the least idea of. Every dish was expected to please not only the palates of the guests, but also their eyes. Before Gonzalvo there was a fine peacock, with the perfect circumference of its beautifully feathered tail displayed; and the difficulty of cooking it without spoiling its beauty had been so successfully overcome, that one might almost have thought the creature alive. It was surrounded in the same dish by several of the smaller species of birds, apparently all looking at their superior in the middle, and all well filled with spices and stuffing. At different distances there were enormous raised pies, and at the proper time, upon a signal from the steward of the household, their covers rose up, seemingly without any one touching them, and dwarf figures in curious costumes started up from within them, and began helping the guests to their contents, or scattering flowers amongst them. The confectionery was sometimes in the form of a miniature hill, on which plants and shrubs laden with candied fruits were growing. Then there was a lake of jelly, in which floated little boats of spun sugar with cargoes of sweetmeats. In another part of the table was a barren, wild-looking mountain, with the crater of a volcano at its summit, the smoke issuing out of it consisting of the most delightful perfumes: on opening it there were found chestnuts and other fruits cooking slowly over flames of spirits of wine. Amongst other game there was a little wild boar, with its skin on, and to all appearance alive, assaulted with spears by hunters made of pastry. On cutting him up he was found to be dressed, and the hunters were distributed in pieces, belonging to the

same dish. Towards the conclusion of the entertainment four pages entered the hall, dressed in harlequin costumes of red and yellow, and mounted on white horses, bringing in an immense dish: upon it lay a tunny five or six feet in length, which they placed before Gonsalvo, every one admiring the extraordinary size of the fish and the manner in which it was garnished, having the figure of a youth with a lyre, intended for Arion, upon its back. Gonsalvo turning to the Duke of Nemours, presented him with a knife, and begged him to open the fish's mouth. The Duke opened it, and out came a number of doves fluttering their wings, and taking flight through the hall as soon as they found themselves freed from their prison. This pleasantry was instantly received with clamorous delight by all assembled; but on some of the doves alighting here and there, it was perceived that from the neck of each were suspended jewels and billets, with names written on the latter.

The company having discovered that the Spanish Commander had selected this easy and humorous mode of making presents to his guests, it was quite an amusing sight to see the confusion which arose from the universal wish to catch the doves; and he who was so fortunate as to secure one, reading the billet on its neck, joyfully went to present it to the person for whom it was intended. Fanfulla, amongst the rest, joined in the sport; and one of them flying close over his head, he was able to perceive that the billet it bore was addressed to Donna Elvira. He had been struck with admiration of the beauty of the Spanish maiden, and was anxious to be the person to

present her with the gift; he accordingly kept an eye on this bird, and nimble and active as he was he managed to get it into his power. He then made his way through the several groups, bent one knee to the ground, and, presenting the dove to the lady, pointed out that there was fastened to its neck a brooch formed of remarkably large and fine diamonds.

Donna Elvira received the dove most graciously, whilst on holding it near her face and caressing it, the little creature, in its terror, flapped its wings and disordered the fair and luxuriant tresses waving over her white forehead, and tinged her countenance with a slight blush of confusion. She engaged herself in detaching the jewel from its neck; and Fanfulla, standing up, said to her, "I should imagine that there are not in the world diamonds more beautiful and costly than those; but, lady, to place them near those eyes of yours deprives them of all their brilliancy." A smile of complacency rewarded Fanfulla for his courtesy.

Some of my readers, accustomed perhaps to the excessive refinement which modern civilization has introduced into all social relations, may think this compliment rather insipid; but I beg them to reflect that, coming from a military man of the fifteenth century, and a mad-brained one like the youth of Lodi, it was as much as could be expected: and what confirms this more than anything that I could say is, that Gonsalvo's daughter thought he had spoken well and discreetly. But Fanfulla, with some envy and vexation, saw that, after looking minutely at and admiring the jewel, she turned to Fie-

ramosca, and presenting him with a golden bodkin, begged him to fasten the brooch to her boddice. Vittoria Colonna being close by approached hastily to do this office ; and Hector, aware that Donna Elvira's proposal was rather inconsiderate, was going to resign the brooch to Vittoria, when Elvira, capricious and accustomed to have her own way, like most children blest with over-indulgent parents, stood between them, and said to Fieramosca with a scornful smile, " Are you so used to wield your sword that you disdain holding a bodkin in your hand even for one moment ?"

The Italian could do no otherwise than obey. Vittoria Colonna turned away, showing by her fine haughty countenance how far *she* would be from condescending to use such blandishments to any one; and Fanfulla staying a moment, looked at Fieramosca and said, " You are a fortunate being! Others sow, and you reap." He then went whistling away, as if he had been alone in a high road, instead of being surrounded by such an assemblage.

All the presents, however, were not destined for the ladies; the French guests were not forgotten. The Duke of Nemours, and his knights as well, received handsome gifts of rings, golden ornaments to wear in the cap, and other trinkets. The Spanish Commander had his reason for displaying this sumptuousness at the banquet: he wished to prove to the French that not only was there no scarcity of provisions for his people, but that there was a superabundance, which allowed him to indulge his courteous intentions.

The amusement of the doves being over, every

one returned to his seat, to be in readiness for the toasts, the time for which was evidently approaching. The Duke of Nemours, following the custom of the French, stood up, holding a goblet of wine in his hand, and addressing himself to Donna Elvira, entreated her to hold him from that time forward as her faithful knight, saving his obedience to the Most Christian King. The maiden couched her acceptance and reply in polite and amiable terms; and after several other toasts, Gonsalvo rose from table, and followed by all his guests went out upon a terrace commanding a view of the sea, where they all whiled away the hours of daylight that still remained.

Donna Elvira and Fieramosca were together the greater part of this time. It seemed as if the damsel could not endure to pass a moment apart from him. If he happened to leave her and mingle with the rest of the company, or join any of the numerous groups engaged in conversation, in a few minutes she contrived to be at his side. Hector had too much discernment not to be aware of this preference; but, from a proper feeling of honour, he was unwilling to encourage it, knowing that it could be productive of no good end; nevertheless, his very disposition and Gonsalvo's own wishes conspired to prevent his being uncourteous. Several persons present detected this by-play, and whispered and sneered on the occasion. Fanfulla, who had not yet conquered his vexation at the occurrence of the dove and the brooch, was more annoyed than ever at seeing his companion in such high favour; and when he found an opportunity of accosting him, he said, half in joke and half in anger, "You shall pay me for this, at all events!"

CHAPTER XV.

ON the ground-floor, in an extensive hall, such as was usually found in old castles devoted to the use of the men-at-arms, a theatre had been erected on this occasion, of a circular form, similar to our modern ones, excepting only that the curtain, instead of being raised, dropped into a place where the orchestra is now placed. A company of strolling players had been engaged from a neighbouring seaport town, who, having been at the Carnival at Venice, were going from town to town, acting dramas and comedies, on their way to Naples, where they were to perform at the festival of St. Gennaro, and thence to Palermo for the festival of St. Rosalia. On their appearance before an audience so select as the present, they had been particularly careful in their preparations, to make the spectacle as gratifying as possible. It was scarcely dark when all the seats were filled with spectators, and orders were given to commence.

Having disposed down below of a great piece of cloth which served for the stage-curtain, the stage appeared, on one side of which was seen a portico with numerous pillars and statues, intended to be the entrance to a palace; and upon it was written in letters of gold, "*City of Babylon.*" Under this portico was a king, seated on a throne and surrounded by his knights, holding a golden sceptre in his hand, dressed in Eastern costume, with a great turban covered with gems, and upon it a crown. Then, in the middle of the stage, was the sea-shore; and on the

other side, upon the flank of a huge rugged hill, with abundance of rocks and trees, was a cavern, out of which came a dragon from time to time, in order to keep guard over a ram's hide with shining gilt wool on it, which was hung up on a tree near the cave. Beside the king, but on a less elevated throne, there sat a tall, well-made, handsome woman, dressed in a red satin gown with long sleeves, and a black velvet hood *à la Française*: she had a reaping-hook, answering the purpose of a scimitar, by her side, and in her hands a book and a wand. This was Medea.

After a few minutes a ship made its appearance on the shore, from which jumped a number of youths in military costume, one of them particularly good-looking, and well armed with a complete suit of mail, all except his head. This was Jason. Two young Moors bore his helmet and shield. Having come forward and paid his respects to the king, this gentleman began a long speech in octosyllabic verses, which probably did not sound more sweetly to Vittoria Colonna's ears, than they may to those of my readers. They began thus:

“ Di Christianità venemo,
Argonauti ce chiamemo,
Al soldan de Babillona,
Che Dio salvi sua corona!”*

And going on in this metre, he proceeded to explain how those youths had come to carry away the golden

* “ From Christendom here come we all,
Argonauts ourselves we call,
To the great king of Babylon,
To whom may God preserve his crown!”

fleece. King Ætes listened to the speech, and then having held a council with his barons and his daughter, replied that he was content, and departed, leaving Medea with Jason.

The latter soon began to admire the lady, and entreating the favour of her assistance, promised to take her back to Christendom, where she should be his wife and a great queen. Medea allowed herself to be persuaded, and taught him a few incantations by which he would be able to lay the dragon asleep; begging him above all things, in case he should use them, to be careful not to name any of the saints or make the sign of the cross, for that such behaviour would assuredly spoil everything. When she had gone away, Jason turning to his comrades remarked, that it was not the practice of brave knights to make use of sorcery in combat, and he therefore was determined to conquer the dragon with arms. He accordingly laid hold of his sword, and protecting himself with his shield, which had been presented to him by one of his squires while the other fastened on his helmet, he rushed to assault the dragon. But the creature, on issuing from its hole, defended itself so well by vomiting flames, that after a battle of a few minutes Jason was obliged to give up the undertaking. His comrades thereupon, with numerous and urgent entreaties, exhorted him to avail himself of the incantations; and having done so, he succeeded in stupifying the dragon and carrying off the golden fleece. This accomplished, Medea came back, begging them to return to their ship with her. Upon this was heard to come from the city a sound of cymbals, clarions, and other Moorish instruments.

After a short interval, a youth came out dressed in Saracen costume, and challenged Jason. The latter accepted the challenge, and after a few blows unhorsed his opponent; but whilst proceeding to the ship with his followers, he was overtaken by king Ætes and his knights, who, seeing that his daughter was endeavouring to escape, and his son lying dead on the ground, gave orders that the departure of the Argonauts should be prevented. Medea then brought her sorcery into play: the atmosphere was darkened, and a number of men in grotesque costumes, intended for demons, ran about with lighted torches, and finished off with setting fire to Babylon, and taking the king and his knights under their especial protection; whilst in the distance the Argonauts might be seen sailing away on their voyage home. So ended the drama.

Let those of our readers who boast of the perfection of our modern theatres consider that the practice in use at the present day in spectacles, to draw applause from the spectators, of managing matters so that the last scene shall invariably conclude with some conflagration or explosion, or with heaven or the infernal regions, is not a novelty introduced by our generation, but, as we have just seen, obtained in these dramas, and was duly appreciated by the people of the fifteenth century. The company before whom this spectacle was represented, although composed in part of persons by no means of uncultivated minds, were satisfied and pleased with it, or at least appeared to be so; and in truth, for comedians like those, and considering the place in which they were, the thing must have been got up in very fair style.

But another portion of the guests invited to the festivities, who by reason of their inferior rank were not permitted to mingle with the knights and nobles, were in the mean time enjoying themselves with another similar spectacle, which had been prepared in the court-yard, and by uproar and acclamations gave certain proofs of a much warmer approval.

Some Spanish soldiers had requested and obtained permission to perform, as well as they could, one of their national comedies ; and having fitted up a place in a corner of the court-yard with benches and drapery something like a theatre, they had been rehearsing for several days, endeavouring to learn and act their parts as perfectly as their abilities allowed. They had arranged for this grand occasion a comedy always a great favourite with Spaniards, entitled *Las Mocedades del Cid*, which literally signifies 'The Boyish Days of the Cid,' or, more correctly, his Youth. If there remained time after the performance of this, it was intended to recite a *Saynetes*, a sort of *petite pièce*, as the French would say.

The comedy commenced in this minor theatre simultaneously with the drama before described as taking place in the superior one. The audience was very numerous and promiscuous, comprising subaltern officers, household officers from the castle, private soldiers, tradesmen and other inhabitants of the town, and a host of the lowest orders. The aristocracy of this assemblage were of course the most commodiously seated nearest the stage, whilst, in proportion as the seats diverged and became more distant from the centre, they were occupied by people of lower, and poorer condition and appearance, until

on the back benches there might be seen a good proportion of ragged rogues and vagabonds out of the streets. The entrance to the court-yard was thrown open to all. The crowd was accordingly very great; and if all the audience, by reason of their different situations, could not enjoy the entertainment equally, those most distant from the stage, and in the most disadvantageous positions, consoled themselves by sending forth vociferous shouts of applause, or, when necessary, yells and hisses of disapprobation. These were heard by the aristocrats near the stage with evident marks of anger and contempt, accompanied by useless attempts to silence them with "Hush! hush!" which, instead of serving as a restraint, only acted as an additional excitement to the uproar.

Amidst this large and mixed crowd, all intent upon amusement, there was a man prowling about, who, in spite of his indigent appearance and shabby dress, had a countenance and mien which prevented his being confounded with the rest of the mob, and whose hurried and restless movements showed that the motive which brought him there was anything but the desire of being diverted. This man was Pietraccio, who had arrived without obstacle at the citadel, for the purpose, if possible, of murdering the Duke of Valentinois, and of warning Fieramosca of Ginevra's danger. Finding himself in the midst of such confusion, he was quite perplexed when he discovered that he might encounter considerable difficulties even in meeting with the persons of whom he was in search. The reader may be astonished that an assassin under sentence of death should venture into the town, and expose himself to the risk of being

taken; and certainly, in the present state of society, it would be conduct of the highest imprudence. But people in those times had not, as we have, police regulations, and police officers constantly on the watch, to preserve tranquillity; and Pietraccio, now that the first excitement caused by the murder of the Mayor was over, might be as safe in Barletta (more especially at night) as he would have been on his own heaths or in his own caverns. But however arduous his present enterprise might be, he was too much in the habit of extricating himself from imminent perils, and too earnest in his desire of revenge, to have any doubts or fears about overcoming every obstacle. We will, however, leave the poor creature to his thoughts, and return to the principal characters of our story.

The second hour of night was fast approaching when, the theatrical entertainments being concluded, the company returned to the banqueting-hall, which in furniture and ornaments had undergone the change necessary to metamorphose it into a ball-room, and was illuminated by an immense number of waxlights disposed in large candelabras all round the walls, and in the centre by a beautiful chandelier suspended from the arched ceiling. The orchestra, as during the banquet, was stationed in an open gallery which surrounded the room at about two-thirds of the height from the floor to the cornice. Besides the musicians, who occupied only one side of the gallery, there was in the remaining part a mixed assemblage of all sorts of people, who had obtained permission to look on at this diversion, in which they could not take any part.

Gonsalvo with his guests and the ladies seated themselves at the upper end of the hall beneath the standards and banners which we have before noticed. The Duke of Nemours shortly after, as soon as the hall was filled with company, stood up and begged Donna Elvira to allow him the honour of opening the ball with her. When the first dance was finished, and the Spanish maiden had again resumed her seat, Fieramosca, desirous of performing the duties of his temporary office with gallantry, approached her and offered her his hand, apologizing at the same time for his want of skill in the accomplishment. His hand was accepted with evident pleasure: many other couples stood up; and Fanfulla amongst the rest, unable for that time to gain Elvira, selected as his partner the most beautiful of the several ladies of Barletta present at the ball, and took his station in what we call a *contre-danse* next to Fieramosca and his lovely companion. His earnest and rash gaze, and the fixed attention he bestowed upon Donna Elvira, could not but be disagreeable to her; but he perceived by her fugitive and tremulous glances that she was anything but displeased with her partner. In fact, the excitement produced by the music, the exercise, the joining hands so frequently, and that familiarity which dancing necessarily allows between persons who in other situations would mutually treat each other with some degree of etiquette and ceremony, had united in occasioning an exuberance of spirits in Gonsalvo's daughter which she could with difficulty repress. Hector and Fanfulla were equally aware of this: to the former it caused grief, to the latter

vexation; and he was constantly showing it by expressions half uttered, or by glances of intelligence, particularly annoying to Fieramosca, who was not fond of these jokes, and accordingly preserved a serious and even melancholy countenance, which was interpreted by the lady in her own way; and this way was far enough from the right one.

At length Donna Elvira, with that giddiness and imprudence so prominent in her character, seizing an opportunity when Hector held her hand, leaned towards him and whispered, "As soon as this dance is over, I shall go on the terrace looking towards the sea; come to me there, I have something to say to you." Fieramosca, astonished and vexed at these words, intended to be the forerunners of a dangerous intrigue, changed countenance, and only replied with a bow of assent. But whether it was that Donna Elvira was not sufficiently cautious in lowering her voice, or that Fanfulla was too closely on the watch, the latter also overheard those unfortunate words; and cursing in his heart the fortune that smiled on Hector and not on him, he muttered between his teeth, "Is there no way of contriving to make the giddy little thing pay dear for this?"

Hector on his part was struggling with various emotions: it never entered his head to pay attention to the seductions of the Spanish beauty; in the first place because the image of Ginevra was still too freshly impressed on his heart; and besides, without this strong reason, he was too sensible to amuse himself at the expense of Gonsalvo's daughter; moreover, her character and manners were not such as to smite his heart, for Hector was not one of those men

easily susceptible on occasions of this kind. But then, on the other hand, he could not bear to be thought an uncourteous pitiful fellow, or something even worse ; for true it is that amongst the inconsistencies of human nature, there is one of calling certain things crimes, and at the same time considering a man a foolish spiritless creature who will not commit them. During the remainder of the dance he occupied himself in turning over in his mind every possible mode he could devise of extricating himself from this dilemma ; and after having formed and dismissed a thousand projects, and seeing that the dance was about to conclude, he resolutely determined to run all risks rather than expose himself even to the possibility of wronging Ginevra. And the idea that she, amidst all these festivities, was pining in a solitary cloister, surrounded by the waters, deserted by every one, and probably thinking of him, made him repent of having for one single instant indulged a thought other than of her love. As soon, therefore, as he had finished dancing with Donna Elvira, he felt anxious to be out of those gaieties, and prepared to leave the ball and retire to the solitude of his home, pleading in excuse of his departure one of those headaches which served, it seems, upon these occasions as well in the sixteenth century as in the nineteenth.

The young men who had joined in the dance, according to the custom of the day, in order to be more at ease, had taken off the mantles generally worn on the left shoulder, and laid them together in an antechamber, retaining their doublet and hose, which were for the most part of white satin. Fanfulla and Hector had both adopted this colour, and resembled

each other closely both in figure and costume : it was difficult to distinguish their general appearance, except when they put on their mantles ; the one worn by Hector being blue embroidered with silver, and that of Fanfulla crimson.

Hector begged Diego Garcia to make an apology to Don Gonsalvo and his daughter for his departure, as he had a severe headache, and proceeded to the antechamber for his mantle : he was about to pass one of the doorways, near which the crowd had left an open space, and no one was near him, when he felt a slight blow on his shoulder, as if of a solid body falling down from above, and looking on the floor, saw near his feet a paper folded, containing something weighty, which had glanced off from his shoulder. He immediately looked up into the gallery whence it seemed to have come, but could not see any one paying particular regard to him. He was walking on, but first stooped down and picked it up, unfolded it, and found a stone inside, placed there to give it weight and allow of its being thrown in the intended direction. He found the following words written in it, in a large and scarcely legible scrawl : "*The Lady Ginevra is to be carried off by the Duke of Valentino's agents from St. Ursula exactly as the clock strikes three**. *He who gives you this warning is waiting for you with three companions at the great gate of the Castle, and has in his hand a Moorish lance !*"

Hector felt a cold shudder running through him even to the very marrow of his bones, and it became doubly agonizing when he recollected having heard the tower-clock strike half-past two some time be-

* The third hour of the night.

fore. There was not an instant to be lost : as deadly pale as a man mortally wounded staggering his last step before he falls, he rushed out of the door as he was, without cap or mantle ; and running with all speed, to the amazement of the people he met with, he flung himself with a tremendous leap to the bottom of the steps, and arrived at the appointed spot with such an impetus that he was obliged to cling by the iron ring at the great gate in order to stop himself. The arch under the gateway was pitch dark ; he looked about him, panting with the exertion and his anxiety, and saw a man come forward with a lance in his hand from under the wall, where he had been concealing himself.

Fieramosca's departure from the ball in such haste and with such a changed countenance had been observed by many ; but they did not think of following him, hearing from Garcia the reason that had been given for it by Hector himself. Inigo, and Brancaleone, however, who were more deeply attached to him than the others, and not to be satisfied so easily, followed him ; and although they were unable to overtake him, they managed to keep him in sight, and were at the great gate within a few moments after him. They found Fieramosca, who had seized hold of Pietraccio and was dragging him along, at the same time repeating, "Quick ! quick ! let us go, then !" Seeing his comrades, he said in a hurried manner, "If you are true friends to me, come with me and give me your aid against that traitor Valentino ; there are seven of us, we can enter a boat and soon be at St. Ursula."

Brancaleone, looking at him and his companions,

replied with rather a disagreeable question, "Where are your arms?" In fact not one of the three had even his sword. Fieramosca was bewildered, stamped on the ground violently, thrust his hands into his hair, and seemed likely to go mad. Brancalone, however, who could when necessary find words as well as remedies, said, "You, Hector, go down with those men to the water's-edge, get a boat and oars in readiness and wait for us; and you, Inigo, come with me;" and off they went running, whilst Hector roared after them, "Quick! quick! it is just three o'clock already!"

His friends, although ignorant of the meaning of these words and of the motive for such haste, knowing that it must be a matter of the greatest urgency, almost flew to the house of the Brothers Colonna, entered the hall where the armour was kept, detached from the walls coats-of-mail, helmets and swords for three, and with equal rapidity ran back and soon joined the others, who were already in the boat. They threw in the arms, and Inigo, who was last, with his feet on the bank, pushed the boat off, jumped in himself, and they all leaned over their oars, straining and bending them with the hard pulling. In leaving the little harbour behind the castle, they had to pass under the clock-tower, and at the moment of passing they heard above them the buzzing noise made by the wheels previously to striking the hour. Poor Hector involuntarily bent forward with his head down, as if he expected the tower to fall the next instant upon his head. After a few seconds the great bell gave the three fatal strokes, and their deep harsh tones, with their decreasing vibrations, made their

way through the air, and were heard faintly repeated by a distant echo. Before seeing the issue of this voyage, it is necessary that we should return for a while to the ball-room.

Fanfulla, as we have seen, had, either by chance or cunning, gained possession of Donna Elvira's secret, and he was quite disposed in his heart to take advantage of it, but he knew not how he could effect this. At last, seeing his favoured rival leave the ball in such a hurry, without either mantle or cap, a mad project seized him; and as he never hesitated an instant in a case where one of his caprices was to be satisfied, whatever might be the consequences, he hastily resolved to execute it. Having closely watched the movements of Gonsalvo's daughter, he had seen that no sooner was the dance over, than she went out upon the terrace, before she could have had an opportunity of being told of Fieramosca's departure. He ran quickly to the antechamber, from which he found all the mantles had been taken by their respective owners, save his own and that of Fieramosca, together with the black velvet cap belonging to the latter, adorned with several falling plumes. He placed it on his head so as for the feathers to shade a great part of his countenance, and threw his friend's blue mantle over his shoulders: any one who had not observed his face might have said it was Fieramosca himself. Dressed in this style, he made his way through the company, and cautiously and quietly passed out upon the terrace, where there were no lights, but the darkness was only slightly dissipated by the reflection of the lamps within the building. Several orange and lemon trees

in boxes placed round a reservoir of water, from the middle of which spouted a fountain, shaded the spot, so that it was easy to find a place of concealment, and escape the notice of any of the company who happened to look out from the apartments where the festivities were going on. As fortune would have it, when Fanfulla came out upon the terrace, no one was there: he went forward cautiously, and saw Donna Elvira seated on the parapet-wall above the sea, with her elbow resting on the iron balustrade, leaning her head on her hand, and gazing motionless at the heavens.

The moon at that moment chanced to be obscured by some little clouds, which a light breeze was sending over it. Fanfulla, aware that if he did not seize that moment, and the moon should again shine out, he should the more probably be recognised, advanced softly and on tiptoe towards Donna Elvira, who did not hear him until he was close by her. When she turned round to look at him, Fanfulla, making an inclination of the head with much grace and dexterity, in token of respect, sunk down on one knee beside her, and taking her hand pressed it to his lips: he managed matters so well, and concealed his countenance so completely, that Gonsalvo's daughter never doubted but that it was Fieramosca. She made, of course, a slight effort to withdraw her hand; but this, after a pardonable struggle, according to the custom of all ages, was forbidden her. We are disposed to think, that although Donna Elvira was of a gay, capricious and wilful disposition, yet on finding herself alone and on such familiar terms with a young man, she must have felt some degree of remorse, and per-

haps some fear also of being discovered in this reprehensible situation by her father, or still worse by her severe friend Vittoria Colonna.

A strong and sudden gust of wind removed the veil that had covered the moon, which being at the full, at once illumined with her bright rays the whole place, and more particularly the brilliant costumes of Fanfulla and Elvira. Perhaps neither of the two was aware of this conspicuousness, but they were at that instant startled by a piercing shriek from a female voice that appeared to come from the base of the terrace, which was only a few yards above the sea. Alarmed at the idea of any one noticing the cry and coming out to ascertain the cause of it, they returned to the hall with hurried steps, and by different entrances, where they found that the few who had heard the shriek, having their minds engaged with other and pleasanter things, thought no more about it. The first cry had been followed by a second one, more feeble, and apparently dying away between the lips of her who uttered it; this was succeeded by the deadened sound of a human body falling down in a boat: but the terrace was deserted, all within-doors were intent upon the festivities, and no one took the trouble of ascertaining who the wretched creature was that gave such fearful proof of want of assistance. Whilst these occurrences took place at the castle, the boat which carried Fieramosca and his companions, urged along by seven robust men, flew over the surface of the water in the direction of the Convent, leaving behind it a long streak of foam. Brancalone seeing that Hector was thinking only of rowing with all the strength of his muscles, said boldly, "Come, Hector,

I know not where we are going, but I am certain it is on no fool's errand ; and if we are to act effectively, we shall find the armour at the bottom of the boat of material service to us." Persuaded by these words, it was agreed that they should arm themselves, taking however the precaution that one only at a time should leave his oar for the purpose. Having girded on their swords, and using light steel caps to protect their heads, they set to work at the oar with renewed vigour, keeping their eyes fixed on the tract of water, to see if they could discover their adversaries ; and Hector on the way acquainted them in broken words with the reason of his demanding their aid. They soon saw a small boat at a little distance from them, and pulled towards it ; but on coming near they perceived that it was rowed by a single man and was going very slowly towards Barletta. Not to waste time, they again took their course in the direction of the Convent, without having been able to distinguish the man who was in the boat. Inigo had recommended their examining it more closely, even though the search might have proved fruitless ; but Hector would not allow it : the appointed hour was passed, and as it was he could hardly indulge a hope of arriving in time. And yet had he followed Inigo's advice, how many misfortunes would he have prevented !

The Convent of St. Ursula appeared to grow larger and larger. Fieramosca kept his eyes fixed on it, and saw all the windows without lights ; when all at once they perceived a long and low-built boat shoot out from behind the building and fly along the surface of the sea like a swallow. Hector, Inigo, and Branca-

leone exclaimed in a voice, but softly, "There they are!" and turning towards the boat redoubled their efforts. The latter perceiving their design, immediately made every endeavour to escape; but the pursuers felt threefold strength within them: the space between the boats visibly diminished; they began to hear the men's voices; and Hector, erecting his figure as much as he could without leaving his oar, perceived a woman extended at the stern of the boat, with two men guarding her, and cried out, "Ah! traitors!" with a shout that echoed among the Convent walls.

"On! on! pull away! one more!" they all cried out earnestly and grinding their teeth with fury, but they already touched the enemy's stern. Hector, quick as lightning, threw aside his oar, and with uplifted sword flung himself in amongst his adversaries, who had just seized the opportunity of preparing for his reception. The violent thrust backwards which he had given to his boat in leaping forward into the other, left the former for a moment a little way behind; he accordingly found himself alone, and received several blows on his chest and head, from which he was protected only by his helmet and coat-of-mail. But his companions, seeing his great danger, soon contrived to come up with him again. Pietraccio was nearest, and was the second to take the leap, but he had hardly arrived where he thought to meet with Valentinois, when a heavy blow on his head from an oar knocked him down and stunned him. Inigo and Brancaleone were now by Hector's side; they all three well knew how to use their weapons, and fighting sword to sword with their anta-

gonists, drove them all to the other end of the boat; but the latter made repeated onsets, and blows and thrusts were given with such fury and rapidity that with the violence and confusion the boat rocked to and fro, and was often in danger of being upset. Pietraccio's comrades had not been able to join in the fray, as there was not standing-room for more than three men a-breast in the place where the fighting was going on; but they were not on that account entirely useless: they took hold of the lady, who was still lying down at the stern, and dragged her into their own boat. The three combatants perceiving this (Brancaleone whispering the advice) quietly retreated, and all at once leaped back into their own boat, allowing the other to get away. Hector would not have been induced to retire so easily, had he recognised Valentinois amongst his adversaries; but not seeing him, he guessed the fact, that the Duke had only risked the lives of some of his bravos, and it seemed a mean thing to soil his hands with *their* blood. Moreover, finding that Ginevra was safe, (at least so he thought,) he esteemed it better to go and comfort her. Don Michael, on the other hand, was absolutely tormented at seeing the fruit of so much anxiety and trouble thus snatched from him, and at not having thought of securing the lady at the prow: but the thing was done, and he well knew that to attempt now to recover his prey from those gallant youths would be something like trying to make a hole in the water. Valentinois' bravo, however, had not retreated from his discomfiture entirely without revenge: whilst the three companions were retreating towards their boat, he kept pressing them hard,

with his sword in his right hand and a dagger in his left, and singling out Fieramosca, who was the last to retreat, he inflicted several blows on him; and whilst the latter was in the act of leaping from the edge of the boat, succeeded in wounding him slightly in the neck; but Hector, in the heat of the fray, did not feel the blow.

The boats then stood off from each other, the one proceeding on its voyage to Barletta, the other rowing to the Convent. The lady was enveloped in a counterpane. Fieramosca, still panting with his exertion, placed her in a sitting position as well as he could, and liberating her from the many folds that concealed her person, found—Zoraide in a swoon, and not Ginevra! At any other moment he would have thanked Heaven that he had been able to rescue *her*; but now he seemed to have done nothing, though an instant before he thought all had been prosperously accomplished. What had become of Ginevra? How did this maiden come there? He sighed deeply and beat his forehead with his fist, and hastening on his companions, (who were surprised to perceive his disappointment, being ignorant of the mistake,) in a few moments he was at the island, up the steps as quick as light, and in Ginevra's apartments: he found every room open and deserted, and the island and convent profoundly quiet. On leaving her chamber for the purpose of seeking elsewhere for intelligence respecting her, his companions arrived in the passage, supporting Zoraide, who had now partially recovered her spirits. To Fieramosca's urgent inquiries she could give no further reply than that about the third hour of night she had been suddenly awakened

by a number of men rushing into her room, who wrapped her up in the counterpane and carried her down into a boat, upon which she fainted, and could not recollect anything else that passed. She could give no information respecting Ginevra, not having seen her since the noon of the previous day, when perceiving that something had made her more than usually sad and desirous of solitude, she (Zoraide), in order not to annoy her, had retired to bed at the usual hour without going into her friend's chamber.

Hector stood listening to this account with his eyes fixed on Zoraide, but towards its conclusion his countenance gradually changed, and his cheeks became paler and more hollow: at last he sunk down on a seat, and endeavouring to rise up again he found his knees fail him. Meanwhile one of the men had gone and knocked at the door of the cloisters, and having roused Gennaro returned with a light. Brancaleone and Inigo were amazed at Fieramosca's aspect, which in a few moments had undergone an alarming change, and they attributed it to his bodily fatigue and mental anguish. He attempted to rise a second time, but his strength had entirely abandoned him, and falling with his head resting on the back of the chair, he said in a fearfully altered voice, "Brancaleone! Inigo! I am very ill—worse than I ever was; I have not power left to raise a feather, much less a sword: time flies, and what will become of Ginevra? Oh that my strength would return but for one hour!—and then I could die willingly. I entreat you, my beloved comrades, not to *delay* another moment—go you—and yet I cannot *direct* you where. But return to Barletta; search for,

find, rescue her,—find her at all events. O God! that *I* should be unable to move a step for her!”

Here he made another effort, but found it unavailing, and again begged his companions more earnestly to leave him and fly to the assistance of the lady. He was so urgent, that they determined to lose no further time in consultations, and went away, promising to return to him with some intelligence as soon as possible: they then, with like precipitation as before, put to sea and rowed towards Barletta. Zoraide anxiously busied herself in succouring her liberator, and with words of grateful and affectionate kindness proceeded to unfasten his helmet and disencumber him of his coat-of-mail. When she had accomplished this, and as she was wiping off the perspiration from his brow and neck, she perceived a wound on the latter, just under the shirt-collar. “Ah me! you are wounded!” she exclaimed, and quickly washing away the blood which had oozed out and made the wound appear larger than it really was, she became calmer, seeing that it was only a slight one, and added, “Oh, it is nothing! a mere scratch!” But on examining it more attentively with the light, she saw a ring of a reddish purple forming itself round the wound, and looking at Fieramosca’s face, perceived a livid appearance round his eyes and lips, and his hands and ears becoming yellow, cold and stiff. Zoraide having been born and brought up in the East, and accustomed to treat wounds of all descriptions, the horrid suspicion was immediately awakened in her mind that the dagger had been poisoned. She insisted on the young man’s retiring to bed, and supporting him she succeeded,

not without considerable fatigue, in getting him upstairs. She felt his pulse, and it beat very slowly and as if the blood was flowing sluggishly.

But the bodily pain was nothing to Fieramosca in comparison with the agonizing thoughts continually multiplying and presenting themselves to his mind in new forms. The rapid succession of events during that evening, and Ginevra's danger, had not till then allowed him to think of aught else beside her; but, like a condemned criminal during the last night of his life, to whose exhausted frame nature has allowed a single hour's repose, and who waking from his dreams feels at once upon his heart, heavy as lead, the certain expectation of his approaching death, so Fieramosca had barely collected his scattered thoughts, when he recollected the challenges and the solemn oath he had taken not to expose himself in the interval to the risk of being wounded. He thought of the ignominy that might attach to him from this breach of faith; of the grief he should endure from his inability to wield his weapon with his other comrades; of the scornful contempt the French would bestow upon him; of Italian honour lost; and all these images probed him so deeply in the most tender part of his frame, that all the muscles of his body were contracted with convulsive motions, and there issued from his bosom such a dismal groan that Zoraide started on her feet with alarm, and inquired of him what occasioned it. Hector exclaimed, "I am eternally disgraced!—the challenge, Zoraide! the challenge!" (striking his hand against his forehead) "there want but a few days to it, and I feel that I am reduced to such feebleness

that I cannot be myself again, no, not for a month to come. O Heaven! for what enormous sin has this punishment been inflicted on me?" The maiden knew not how to reply, but she probably thought less of the combat than of the present perils hanging over him who was so dear to her; perils which her experience told her were becoming gradually more and more serious. A species of lethargy was following fast upon that moment of orgasm; he stretched himself out, his head sunk down upon the pillow, he was deadly pale, there was a trembling and throbbing of the veins in his neck, and Zoraide on looking at the wound found the red circle materially larger.

But Hector continued fretting, and exclaimed, "Behold the champion of Italian honour! behold the glorious conclusion of the combat, after all our bravados and boastings! And yet where is my crime? could I have acted otherwise than I have done?" These reasonings were far from comforting him, and he thought too, "To whom can I tell my story? to whom can I explain the reasons for my conduct? and were I to tell them, would not my enemies pretend to disbelieve them, and say 'Hector invented this rigmarole because he was afraid of us.?'"

Whilst his mind was agitated with these ideas, the poison with which he had too certainly been inoculated by Don Michael's poniard, was making rapid progress, creeping through the veins which overspread the surface of the skull, and causing a feeling of pressure on the temples. By degrees both his vision and the light of his intellect became clouded and confused, so that the objects before him appeared first to dance, and then to twirl round with amazing ra-

pidity, at the same time scattering bright stars that dazzled his sight. Zoraide was standing by his side regarding him with terror and trembling, and Hector kept his eyes wide open, staring at her countenance. In this wavering of his senses, by the faint light of the expiring lamp he fancied that her lineaments altered their form and then changed into the countenance of La Motte. The spectre of the Frenchman, twisting up the corners of its mouth, smiled a bitter and ghastly smile at him ; the lips then grew thicker and larger, and opened, and out of them came the figure of Grajano d'Asti, from little growing larger and larger, until opening its mouth also in like manner, it brought forth the sallow semblance of the Duke Valentinois. These spectral forms, produced one by the other, presented a sort of phantasmagoria of all the personages who happened at that time to stand out most conspicuously in the mind of the wounded man. Amongst the rest came the image of Ginevra, to whom by name he called for assistance, using at the same time the warmest expressions of love, and exclaiming in his delirium, "To leave me to die in this state ! I that loved thee so well ! Raise me out of this horrid hole—take away these spiders that are crawling over my face !" At last all the spectres which had presented themselves to his bewildered brain became confused together, forming one united and shapeless tint, red and tremulous like a prolonged flash of lightning ; then fading and darkening gradually, it became entirely extinguished just at the moment when the youth's mental and bodily faculties were entirely suspended.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN order to proceed regularly in our relation of the several incidents which befell the different acting personages of our story on that evening, it has been necessary to keep the reader in suspense with regard to each individual one. True it is this habit is but too general amongst narrators, though not on that account the more agreeable, especially when we chance to have a book in our hands of sufficient interest to make us wish to arrive at the conclusion. We however need make no laboured apology for following this general custom, since it was unavoidable in our case: besides, such an excuse might only seem an act of vanity, and cause a laugh at our expense; for the modesty which in one person is a virtue, may in another be interested hypocrisy.

However that may be, we must leave even Fieramosca for a short time and return to the citadel to Valentinois, whom we left in his suite of apartments on the ground-floor looking out upon the sea. The first of the two schemes which had induced him to come to the French camp, in spite of his deep craftiness, had failed; as he had been unable to inspire Gonsalvo with such confidence as to induce him to enter into a league with him, or at least to afford him protection and assistance. The Spaniard, keeping faith with him as regarded his promise of concealing him, had declined meeting his proposals, treating him nevertheless with that deference which was

considered to be due, if not to his character, at least to his rank. During the six or seven days that elapsed between the opening and breaking off of this treaty, he remained almost entirely shut up in his apartments to avoid showing himself; and if sometimes he went out to enjoy the fresh air, it was only at night, and in a mask, such as was commonly used by men of high rank in those times, to cover by this mystery frequent practices by no means laudable. But, as we have before described, to his political views were united plots against her who had been so bold as to show him her scorn and contempt; and these machinations, by means of the dexterity and according to the promises of Don Michael, were that evening to prove effectual. It may seem hard to conceive how this distinguished villain, worn out by unrestrained indulgence in sensual pleasures, could value so highly the possession of one particular female, and track her with so much earnestness and diligence. And in fact it would be an error to suppose that love, even in the most degraded sense of the word, had any share in guiding the Duke's desires. But Ginevra had resisted him, and had added to her resistance contempt and horror of him; he had reason to suppose that she was living happily with another: he considered that in this affair he had come off worst, and was despised in consequence; and who in the universe should live to boast of having outwitted Cæsar Borgia? Of the many ladies he had met with at all remarkable for beauty, he had abandoned all either to guilt or unhappiness; and yet amongst these were many pious and virtuous women, and some who, from their relationship to powerful

men, might have considered themselves secure from his villany. Could he then support the thought that a young girl, little known and less cared for, should make a laughing-stock of him who caused Italy to tremble from one extremity to the other?

At this hour, however, Valentino calculated that his revenge was close at hand, and said within himself, "Thou shalt pay dear for giving me the annoyance of hiding myself in this manner!" And in truth, this confinement in secret chambers, not unlike a prison, accustomed as he was to a splendid and luxurious life at the court of Rome, must have appeared a hardship to him, if indeed the endurance of a hundred privations appeared hard to that man when bent upon attaining his end. Nevertheless, occupations to fill up his time were not entirely wanting. Besides the hours passed in conference with Gonzalvo, and those spent in organizing the other enterprise with Don Michael, messengers came to him daily from Romagna, despatched by his most trusty confidants, bringing to him letters, notes, and news of passing events. These men arrived and departed in the night-time, verifying in all respects the assertion of Macchiavelli, who, when writing to the Council of Florence, shortly before the time of our story, said, "Of all the courts in the world, the one where they preserve secrecy the most effectually is the court of the Duke." Although he did not plainly add the reason why, he left it to be understood that there the silence of the tomb was imposed upon all who had imprudent tongues. This correspondence was kept up by means of light vessels coasting along

the shore from Romagna, and running in and concealing themselves amongst the rocks at the foot of Mount Gargano. Thence the messenger went off at night in a boat to the citadel; and from their crews, composed of chosen men, Don Michael had selected the companions necessary to assist him in his enterprize.

On this evening, whilst the rest of the castle was filled with noise and bustle, the Duke of Valentinois was seated before a table lighted by a lamp, reading over a second time, to while away the hours, the numerous papers which had been brought by the messengers the preceding night. He was dressed in a cloak of black satin, closed in front by a row of small buttons, the bust and sleeves rather tight; hanging down loosely over the latter were several points of white velvet, confined only to the arm in four places by loops of the same material: his cloak was unbuttoned near the collar, and displayed a suit of mail of fine steel, which he always wore beneath his outer garments. This was the Duke's usual costume; and whoever has visited the Borghese Gallery at Rome, will remember having seen it adopted in the portrait of him there drawn by the hand of Raphael. In spite of the natural strength of his constitution, he was occasionally troubled with an acrid species of erysipelas, which sometimes crept secretly through his frame, but at other times caused a cutaneous eruption, on his face especially. In the latter the disgusting hideousness of his appearance was such as to cause a shudder even in those who were constantly about him. A mind like his could not have clothed

itself in a form more completely its own prototype. The sedentary life he had been leading for the last few days, had induced a virulent eruption of this disease, making his face more frightful than ever, and giving to his whole manner a perpetual restlessness, the general consequence of such complaints.

About the second hour of night, just at the time when the ball was commencing in the castle above, the door of the Duke's chamber was opened gently by a man dressed in dark red hose tight to the legs, and a cloak reaching down rather below his hips, with a large black hat slouched over his eyes, a sword, poniard, and something under his arm. Valentinois looked up, and the other entering with a respectful bow, placed a packet on the table, neither of the two having uttered a word. The Duke, laying his hand on the packet, said to the messenger, "Tonight I shall leave this place: go to the innermost of these apartments, shut yourself in, and if you should hear anything do not come unless I call you."

The man passed across the room and went out by the door opposite to the one through which he had entered, and Caesar Borgia, drawing a small sharp dagger from his side, cut the cords of red silk which, with the apostolical seals thereon, inclosed a letter on parchment written by Pope Alexander. On opening it a small golden ball fell out and rolled along the table, at the sight of which the Duke started on his feet with a look of fearful suspicion; but after examining more closely the seals and the handwriting, he became calm again, and resumed his seat at the table.

This alarm must not be attributed to cowardice or

a foolish panic. In those ages there were such various and cunning modes of administering poisons, even of sending them inclosed in letters, on the opening of which they worked their effect instantaneously, that we may pardon the Duke for being startled at such an unexpected sight; and if there was a man in the world who would be justified in entertaining the worst suspicions, it was assuredly Cæsar Borgia.

The letter was written in a cipher to which no one had the key but His Holiness and himself: from habit he could read it with ease, and the contents were as follow:—

“A few days ago we had a long conference with the ambassador of the Most Christian King, who pressed us to close and confirm the terms of the league against His Catholic Majesty, in order to despoil him of the kingdom; also offering us abundant assistance in making a descent upon Siena and the state of Count Gio. Giordano: on which matters we have been unwilling to enter before we know on what terms you stand with the magnificent Gonsalvo. We do not imagine that France, though her arms may appear flourishing at the present moment, will be able for any length of time to make head against Ferdinand's army, commanded as it is by such a leader, and seeing that it can be augmented, or its losses restored, by way of the sea. Moreover, the French are ill able to support a prolonged and straitened war; it will therefore be the wisest conduct to keep up an amicable communication with both parties; and in the mean time let them knock their heads toge-

ther, until some effect follow from which we may be able to decide upon our future course.

“ Yesterday the mother of Cardinal Orsino paid us a visit, bringing us the two thousand crowns, and requesting permission to send provisions for him into the castle as hitherto : this we have generously granted, having already provided for her son, and given him a powder which will allow him a month of life, and no more.

“ At the second hour of the night also arrived the lady Septimia, a friend of the Cardinal’s, bringing us the pearl formerly belonging to Signor Virginio Orsino, and given to him by that Cardinal. She came dressed like a man into the painted chamber.

“ It being our intention, *totis viribus*, to work the destruction of the Orsino faction, to the greater glory and exaltation of the Holy Church, we charge you to be in readiness to lead your army into the Campagna, and encamp before Bracciano, where those worst enemies of God and the Church are making head ; and the rather, if the French army should meet with any defeat, in which case we should be inclined to pay less respect to His Most Christian Majesty.

“ As, in consequence of the late heavy expenditure, the apostolic treasury is rather in want of supplies, we think of bestowing the cardinal’s hat on Gio. Castellar, the archbishop, Francesco Remolino, ambassador of the king of Arragon, Francesco Soderini of Volterra, Mgr. di Corneto, our Secretary of Briefs, and a few other wealthy men. And on your arrival in Rome we shall give the necessary orders for carrying our pleasure into effect.

“ Master Achmet, the ambassador just come from

the Sultan, conversing with us on several wonderful mysteries of art, has shown us that through the influence of Saturn, which is now found in ascendancy with Jupiter and Venus in the chamber of the Sun, we are likely to encounter serious dangers during the present year; as a charm against which, he has advised us to wear constantly about our person a golden ball similar to the one we send you for the like purpose, in which we have inserted the Host consecrated by us. *Vale!*

“ALESS. P. VI.”

“Dat. Romæ, in ædib. Vatic. die xv. mens. Martii MDIII.”

Although the facts pointed out in this horrible letter are but too true, and particularly the treacherous plot against the Cardinal Orsino, the effects of which recoiling on the Pope were, as every one knows, the cause of his death, we were rather doubtful whether we ought to place such villany before the eyes of our readers. But if God, in his impetrable wisdom, has suffered one of the highest guardians of holy things on earth thus dreadfully to abuse his sacred station, it might be injurious to conceal his iniquities, and we might be charged with partiality, and with seeking rather the triumph of a sect than that of truth, which requires not the aid of duplicity or concealment to defend itself. The crimes of Pope Borgia, and of many other ministers of the Church, will be weighed in the incorruptible balance of the wrath of God, and it is not permitted to man to foresee his judgement on them; but from the ashes of those Popes, no less than from the tombs of the martyrs, a truth rises up, which shows us, that not

by gold nor the sword, nor by court intrigues, but by Gospel virtues, is the cross of Christ exalted and rendered glorious.

The reflections that passed through the mind of the Duke of Romagna on reading his father's letter were, as may be imagined, very different from these. Looking now at the writing and now at the golden ball, with which his fingers were playing, he composed his countenance into a sort of smile, in which appeared on the one side contempt, since he believed not in God or the Saints ; on the other, timid and suspicious credulity, for he had some faith in astrology. So true is it that the human intellect must have in view some principle beyond the limits of the terrestrial globe. If he had not before been disposed to depart that night for Romagna, the contents of this epistle would have determined him. A plot which promised to satisfy his ambition and fill his coffers so well, was a very different thing from a useless intrigue with a woman. He thought Don Michael could not be much longer in returning ; so placing the golden ball in his bosom with the careless air of one who says ' What will be will be,' he set himself about collecting his papers and the other articles which he intended to take with him.

In a few minutes everything was in readiness. He returned to his seat, and not knowing how to employ himself, took out the golden ball, and began looking at it again and again and dropping it from one hand to the other, thinking the while on the consecrated Host it contained, and the person who sent it. Then from one idea to another his mind passed on to the religion of which that man was the head, to the

articles of faith which he himself at one time believed in, to his own splendid state, the fruit of the subjection of the people to Papal authority; and after ridiculing in his heart such universal credulity, and thinking to himself 'I may as well enjoy the benefit of it,' he seemed to hear a small still voice issuing from beneath that edifice of pride, violence, and irreligion, and whispering 'Supposing it were true!' The Duke, unwilling to pay attention to this voice, but incapable of silencing it, felt uneasy, rose up from his seat, paced backwards and forwards through his chamber, and did his best to divert his thoughts from the subject. All was in vain: that '*Supposing it were true!*' pressed upon him, troubled him, and snatched from him for a time the satisfaction of all the honours, power and riches that he possessed. He threw himself on his bed, and, hiding his face in the pillows, gave way to the wildest emotions, and it was some time before he succeeded in calming himself. He felt his eyelids heavy; he closed them, and slept.

But even in sleep the course of his ideas continuing in the same channel, he dreamed that he was at Rome, in the street leading from the castle to St. Peter's. Heaven and earth were in a state of chaos; all was confusion, all filled with darkness and resounding with shouts of terror. He rushed onwards, intending to take refuge in St. Peter's, but he fancied himself held back; he looked with fear around him; and saw the whole number of those whom he had betrayed, assassinated, and poisoned: they clutched him by the hair of his head, and dug their nails into his flesh, with a prolonged and desperate yell of ven-

geance. Presently, without knowing how, he was in the interior of St. Peter's, amidst an unutterable confusion of things, dreadful darkness, lamentations, the tottering of the walls, the yawning of the graves, the stalking of spectres, and he was still torn by his victims, who were constantly crying out, "Justice from God!" and he thought, "This, then, is the judgement in which I was unwilling to believe!" He dragged himself despairingly forward to seek for protection beside the Pope, whom he saw at the great altar, seated on a throne and surrounded by a pale and feeble light. But on one side he was hindered by his brother the Duke of Candia, with his wounds gaping open, and corrupt lymph instead of blood gushing out from them, his whole body having the livid and puffed out appearance of a corpse putrefied under water; on the other by the Duke of Biselli and Astorre Manfredi, and women and children, all weeping and extending their arms towards the Pope, and crying for justice and vengeance! The Pope was attired in a large cope, and had his triple crown on his head. The fat, flabby and wrinkled visage of Alexander the Sixth was yellow like that of a dead body; his figure rose slowly and gradually, and steadied itself on its feet, and the yells and lamentations were drowned by a hellish burst of laughter proceeding from the mouth of His Holiness, accompanied by this speech, "Christ, the Faith, the Pope—all impostures!" and this last word echoed through the vaults of the church with a lengthened howl.

While this horrid sound was still ringing in his ears, the Duke started up in bed, his eyes open, and wide

awake. He remained alarmed for a moment or two; but this dream only rendered more obstinate in him the wicked belief that he might commit any crime without fear of punishment in another life. Whilst comforting himself as well as he could with such a thought, (three o'clock* had struck a few minutes before,) the buzz of many persons talking, the sounds, noises and joyful exclamations descending from the upper floors of the castle, came faintly through the massy vaults and walls of that ground-floor, when the same shriek which had interrupted the dialogue between Fanfulla and Donna Elvira was heard by the Duke much nearer to him, and apparently as if it came from behind his own door, which looked out upon a small piece of dry sand between the water's edge and the foundations of the castle. He went out to see who had uttered it, but could perceive nothing except a small boat which had been run ashore and lay dry upon the sand. He cast his eyes up towards the terrace and the windows, saw no one, and was about to return into his apartment; he first, however, took a few steps towards the boat, and stretching his neck over its edge found extended at the bottom a lady, with her head down between her hands, and groaning from time to time. After a start of surprise he at once took his resolution, and getting into the boat, introducing one arm under her back, and with the other placing her on his knees, he raised her up and carried her, insensible as she was, into his chamber, and laid her on the bed. But what was his astonishment when, on holding the light near to her face, he discovered it was Ginevra! That countenance

* The third hour of night.

was too deeply impressed upon his memory for him to disbelieve his own eyes; but how could he divine by what strange accident she had thus fallen into his hands, alone, and, to all appearance, escaped from the snares of Don Michael? 'Henceforward,' said he to himself, 'I am bound to believe in the existence of the devil: none but a friendly demon could have served me so well.' Placing the lamp on a small table near the pillow, and seating himself on the side of the bed, he earnestly watched the play of Ginevra's countenance, to catch the first moment of her returning sensation. The satisfaction of being able at length to enjoy a revenge long and anxiously waited for, kindled a sort of running fire in his eyes like the passage of an electric spark from one eyeball to another; and the spots which defiled his face seemed tinged with a blood-red colour.

Uniting physical deformity to that which is induced by a criminal expression of countenance, the face of man could certainly never have presented a more horrible aspect than his. Ginevra, on the one hand, pale and motionless, with grief depicted on her features, and on the other Valentino such as we have described him, formed a mournful and a piteous picture. Both remained quietly in this position for some time. Ginevra might be said to be happy as long as her lost senses and her dazzled eyes deprived her of the knowledge of the place in which she was, prevented her recognizing that man who was now her absolute master. But this happy state could not last long; and by a slight movement Cæsar Borgia perceived that his victim was about to open her eyes. In that place and at that hour he was certain that he

should meet with no impediment : no cry from under those vaulted chambers, during the noisiest part of the festivities, could have been heard in the castle above. Finding, therefore, that everything was so safe, he determined in his heart, since he had the opportunity, to seize it and take advantage of fortune's unexpected favours.

At last a deep sigh issued forth from the bosom of the unfortunate lady, heaving up the drapery which shaded it. She opened her eyes for a moment, but soon closed them again. She opened them a second and a third time, and then began gazing with a stupefied expression at the unknown visage of the being standing over her : but it was only the substance she saw ; her mind was not sufficiently recovered to enable her to attach ideas to the vision. Nevertheless her eyes seemed unable to support the image of so disfigured an object, and she slowly turned them away from it with a movement so languid that it must have excited compassion in any other being than him. In returning gradually to her senses, the first recollection which struck her was that of Fieramosca on the terrace at the feet of Donna Elvira. " O Hector !" said she, scarcely articulating the syllables, " then was it true, and am I betrayed by thee ? " and passing the palms of her hands before her eyes and over her fair forehead, she remained a few minutes in this state. Valentinois, on hearing that name, contracted his lips into a scornful sneer.

Ginevra then recollected that she had been in a boat, and raising herself on her elbow, in an attempt to get up, felt the softness of the bed, opened her

eyes wide with fright, and, seeing the Duke, uttered a scream, which was soon stifled by his seizing her throat and thrusting her back on the bed.

"Do not cry out, Ginevra," said Valentino; "you will waste your breath: I am really glad that you have come to find me, and you shall have something to refresh you after the fatigues of a voyage at this hour. Perhaps you did not come in search of me, —is it so? But what would you have? Our wishes are not always gratified."

Poor Ginevra listened to these words with a shudder that took away her strength. Not having seen the Duke for a long time, she did not at first absolutely recognise him, and only felt horrified at the sight of him, calling to her mind a confused recollection of that odious physiognomy. Knowing that she was helpless, she merely said, "Sir!—who are you? Have pity on me!—what would you?—leave me—ah! the Duke!"

"Do you remember, Ginevra," said he, "when you were in Rome a few years ago, the manner in which you behaved to one who loved you to distraction, and who would have bestowed upon you rich presents and abundance of caresses? Do you remember that you treated him worse than you could have treated a stable varlet? that you laughed at his love and despised his offers, while you clothed yourself in haughtiness which would have been excessive even in a queen? And do you know who that person was? I am that man,—and know you who I am? *Cæsar Borgia!*"

This name fell with the weight of lead on Ginevra's heart, so as to stifle every hope; she therefore

remained silent, looking at the Duke, and trembling as she would have done at a tiger which held her in his claws, and which it would have been absurd to endeavour to soften by words.

"Now that you know who I am," continued the Duke, "you may judge whether you ought to expect any compassion from me: nevertheless you can bend me if you will, and prevent my wreaking vengeance on you as I could, and otherwise would do. But this is on one condition, Ginevra,—that you act rationally: you have it in your power."

These words being less vindictive than the preceding ones, could not but awaken in Ginevra's bosom a faint gleam of hope, and with hands clasped and using a strong effort not to show the horror she felt at his presence, she began praying to him, as she would have done before a cross, not to oppress a poor insignificant female already miserable and unhappy. "I entreat you, my Lord, by the sufferings of Jesus, by that solemn day in which even you, now so powerful on earth, will find yourself divested of everything but your soul, and *that* laid bare before your Eternal Judge! If you have had a wife dear to you, tell me, if she were in the power of another, and begged in vain for pity; if your mother—if your sister, were placed in a situation such as mine, and prayed, and prayed in vain—would you not cry to Heaven for vengeance—is it not true?—against any one who dared to outrage them?"

This appeal, which coupled ideas of virtue and chastity with the names of Vannozza and Lucretia Borgia, raised a smile on Valentino's countenance, who knew their real characters but too well. But it

was an ill-omened smile, and added to Ginevra's terror: yet she proceeded in her entreaties, her voice gradually changing and faltering with weeping as she spoke, so that owing to her convulsive sobs these last words were scarcely audible: "I, who am a poor wretched woman, what good, what glory will arise to a powerful nobleman like you, from revenging yourself on me? And who knows but that the time will come when your having felt pity for me will be as a balsam to your heart?"

To tell the sorrow, the anguish, the desperation of the miserable Ginevra, on finding herself in this dreadful extremity, to describe her tears, her prayers, her furious cries and maddened imprecations, would be impossible, and we should be presenting to our readers too torturing a picture. We shall simply say that her doom was irrevocably fixed.

Meanwhile Don Michael returning with his comrades, vexed and empty-handed, and dreading his master's anger, arrived at the foot of the Castle. He immediately commenced with his excuses, but was soon stopped by the Duke saying, "Ah, you may tell me about that some other time; for the present, I know much more of the affair than you do." This speech might have made Don Michael think his master was angry with him, had he not perceived by the tone and manner in which it was uttered, that there was some mysterious meaning in it that did not implicate him.

Valentino turned to the men who had come with Don Michael, and said, "Quick, fellows! into the boat, and wait for me under St. Ursula. And you, Michael, come with me." The men rowed away, and

were soon out of sight. Don Michael followed the Duke into his apartment, and soon returned, carrying out Ginevra and laying her in the boat where she had been found. When this was done the messenger was called out from the inner chamber ; all three entered into his boat without uttering a word, and as soon as they overtook the one which had gone before, they got into it. The Duke took his seat astern, and Don Michael stood before him. Although he was now aware why his master was indifferent about the failure of his enterprise, he wished to tell his reason for returning empty-handed, and proceeded to give a particular account of the manner in which he had managed the enterprise, and how he was attacked by several men, so that he was unable to make an effectual defence, and the lady was accordingly rescued. " One of them has suffered for it, however," added he, pointing over his shoulder towards Pietraccio, who, as we have seen, received a serious blow on his head from an oar, and had fallen stunned into the boat, where he had remained a prisoner. At that time he had come to himself again, and was sitting within two yards of the Duke ; and the men trusting in the notion that he was more dead than alive, and in the impossibility, moreover, of his escaping out of their hands, let him remain where he was.

" This rascal," continued Don Michael, " jumped like a fury into our boat, but our Rosso treated him with such a blow behind the ear as stretched him at his length. I thought he was killed, but he seems reviving again."

From some expressions in Don Michael's narra-

tive, Pietraccio became aware, to a certainty, of his being in the presence of the man whom he had been searching for in vain the whole of that evening. Valentino perceived that the wounded man was eyeing him askance with a dreadfully savage expression, and beginning to suspect that he was meditating some villany against him, was on the point of ordering him to be thrown overboard as food to the fishes. Don Michael, who, as our reader will recollect, had heard the last words of the assassin's mother when in the prison at St. Ursula, and her last request that he would seek out and execute vengeance upon Cæsar Borgia, also glancing slyly at him, saw that he was intending something desperate. The Duke's ruffian, who served his master chiefly because he profited from his protection and pay, would nevertheless have been rejoiced if, without being himself discovered and punished as an accomplice, he could have contrived to revenge himself against him for old causes of offence. It will be easier for the reader to imagine the disposition of this man towards his employer, when he knows that the female who died in the dungeon of the tower, before Don Michael's eyes, was his own wife. When, in consequence of the encounter with Fieramosca and his companions, he found he had Pietraccio in his power, he had hastily put together a few confused notions, and, as it were, made a rough sketch of a project by which he might make use of him in revenging himself against his master, but the time had been so short that he had not yet determined upon the exact mode. Without fixing anything, he thought only of seizing any opportunity that presented itself; and at this moment affairs

seemed to be going on prosperously towards the accomplishment of his ends.

In fact, a moment of silence followed Don Michael's last words, which was sufficient to the young man for the execution of his plan. He rose from where he was sitting, darted past Don Michael, who, pretending to endeavour to stop him, allowed him to slip through his hands, and flung himself like a wild beast upon Valentinois, intending to use his nails and teeth in tearing him to pieces; but the Duke was on his guard and ready to receive him, and Don Michael had barely time to seize Pietraccio's arm, when the latter fell down lifeless into the boat, stabbed by the small dagger which the Duke wore at his girdle, and had used with incredible rapidity. The whole affair happened so suddenly that the attention of the rowers was only attracted to it when all was over; and resting on their oars, they perceived Valentinois replacing his poniard in its sheath, spurning with his foot the still palpitating corpse, and giving orders for it to be thrown into the water.

"The madman! the villain!" exclaimed Don Michael, apparently much affected and agitated by the Duke's late danger; "and yet no one will make me believe but that this man was something different from what he appeared. I happened to see him a few days ago in the dungeon of the tower of the convent there, where he was imprisoned with his mother. They had both been captured by the guards, with a troop of brigands; the mother died of some wounds she received in defending herself; and before she breathed her last she gave her son a gold chain, telling him at the same time some nonsensical tale about

it. Ah! now I remember;—she said it had been given to her by a paramour of hers at Pisa;—and yet—stop, stop, Rosso! before you fling him overboard I should like to see whether he has it round his neck. The gold, at all events, may as well not go into the fish's mouth." So saying, he went and unbuttoned the youth's doublet in front, discovered the chain, and taking it in his hand brought and showed it to the Duke, who had been listening to him with great attention.

Even Valentinois had not sufficient command over himself to conceal the sudden start and trouble which this sight caused him. He seemed for a moment quite beside himself; and his hands, which supported the jewel pendent from the gold chain, dropped on his knees as though all strength had left them. He sank back on his seat, repeating with a hoarse and faltering voice his previous command that the corpse should be thrown into the sea: then turning his head the other way, he was made aware of the prompt obedience to his orders by the plunge he heard in the water, and the splashing of the latter coming into the boat. Grasping the chain he cast it away from him, and wrapping himself up in his cloak rested his head on his hand, and was silent. Don Michael, affecting respect for the thoughts which engrossed the Duke's mind, retired and took his seat amongst the boat's crew. They all rowed on in silence, and nothing more was heard during the remainder of the voyage but the light splash of the oars, and the dripping of the water off them as they rose from its surface. Valentinois' servant had now a revenge which perhaps no one had ever before obtained over

that man ; he had succeeded in awakening recollections in his heart which forced him to feel some sort of remorse ; and that remorse, too, despoiled of all consolation, and resembling the despair of hell. It was no small triumph to Don Michael that he had succeeded in making the other feel the full force of it. After these incidents, proceeding on their way, they reached the vessel which was in waiting for them, and which soon set sail on its return to Romagna. But we will not follow these villains any further.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE departure of Fieramosca and his two friends from the ball was observed by few, and did not disturb the general mirth and gaiety. Fanfulla, retiring from the terrace where he had been with Donna Elvira, quickly and without being perceived disposed of the borrowed articles of dress belonging to his friend, and returning and mingling amongst the dancers as if nothing had happened, laughed in his sleeve at the joke which had been practised so fortunately, and was dying with the desire of telling it. Gonsalvo's daughter directed her bright glances in all directions through the different groups of the company in search of Hector, and not seeing him anywhere, could not imagine the reason of his wish to conceal himself from her after what had happened.

About an hour had passed in this manner, when Brancaleone and Inigo entered hastily and inquired for Gonsalvo from the first persons they met. They

were directed towards one corner of the ball-room, where the Great Captain was engaged in conversation with a group of French knights. They approached him, drew him aside, and informed him briefly of what had happened, and that they had been told Valentino was in the castle, and that the outrage was committed by his orders. They entreated him to advise them how to act. Gonsalvo, who well knew him to be capable of such villanies, and even of worse ones if expedient, mused for a moment, and then bid them accompany him to his apartments. In going thither he saw Diego García, and beckoned to him also to follow.

He was unwilling to admit that the Duke was in the citadel, as it might seem a breach of confidence; but recollecting that he had taken leave that very day, saying that he intended to depart during the night, it seemed extraordinary that he should have selected the very last moment of his stay there to commit such an excess. At all events Gonsalvo was determined to clear up the matter; and telling his followers to carry with them a couple of lights, he girded on his sword, and proceeded through a long passage which terminated in a winding staircase, down which he went, opening two iron wickets which closed the entrance. There remained one more door to be opened. Gonsalvo stopped, and in a low voice directed his attendants to wait, without making any noise, and not to come unless they should be called. Having opened it he descended into the Duke's apartment, which he found deserted, in total darkness, and in utter confusion: here a chair, there a table upset; a lamp lying on the floor near the bed, and the oil running over the boards; the ad-

joining chambers empty. He then called the others, and having thought for a moment, said, "I should be unwilling to run the risk of injuring an innocent person for the sake of keeping faith with a villain. Know, then, that the Duke has occupied this apartment for several days past: it was his intention to take his departure this night or tomorrow morning: more I cannot tell you, since it is all I know respecting his movements. All of us here must be persuaded that he is capable of any crime, and it is very probable that he is the author of the one in question. Do, then, what seems best to you; pursue him if you will; I give you full permission: and you, Don Diego, afford them every assistance in your power."

The idea occurred to Inigo of looking out upon the sea, to try if they could discover any vessel likely to be carrying him away; but through the thick glass it was impossible to see anything; and in order not to lose time in trying to unfasten the great windows, he ran to the door which led out to the little tract of sand before mentioned, and with which he was well acquainted, knowing as he did all the ins and outs of the citadel. On going out he perceived a boat, with a young female lying at the bottom of it: although he did not know her, it immediately occurred to him that it must be Ginevra. Having called vehemently for his companions, they came out in haste, and knew not what to think on seeing her abandoned in such a situation. As carefully as they could they carried her in, and laid her on the Duke's bed, which had been found in disorder, but which they arranged in their best manner; and Gonsalvo feeling a deep pity for the poor creature,

who appeared all bruised and scratched in the face, with her hair dishevelled and torn, returned hastily upstairs to seek for a female to whose care she might be confided. Unwilling that the matter should be spread abroad whilst they were entirely in the dark respecting it, he resolved to trust it to Vittoria Colonna, whose mature sense and judgement were well known to him. He entered the ball-room, found the daughter of Fabrizio, and conducted her quietly towards Ginevra's bedside, informing her on the way of what had happened, and of what importance to the unfortunate stranger her comfort and assistance would be in that extremity. The courageous heart of Vittoria Colonna received this charge with earnest gratitude; and as soon as she arrived at the couch of the wretched female, and had gazed a moment on her countenance, she employed herself in arranging her couch, smoothing her pillow, and placing her in a more easy position, with that anxious, thoughtful, and considerate kindness with which Providence has specially endowed woman, making her as it were the peculiar instrument of comfort and consolation to the afflicted.

The state of Ginevra was a species of lethargy, induced by her extreme suffering, a total prostration of strength. She could neither be said to be out of her senses nor in them: she remained just as she was placed; if her arm was moved, or her head, it made no resistance, and she appeared not to perceive it. Her eyes were open in the natural way, but they had a glazed look, and she rolled them about without fixing them on any object. Vittoria well knew that these symptoms, though not seemingly violent, were

only the more serious. She knew that there was not an instant to be lost; and accordingly, having dismissed the gentlemen, she sent for some of her female attendants, who quickly came with spirits and cordials, by means of which Ginevra was soon restored to a life that had seemed on the verge of being extinguished. The first sign she gave of her returning faculties was to look around her with a terrified gaze, and then to throw herself out of the bed and attempt to escape; but so feeble was she, that she would have fallen to the earth if Vittoria's arm had not saved her, and with a slight exercise of force replaced her on the couch.

"O God!" said Ginevra, "are you too an accomplice? You seem to me to be a lady; you are young and beautiful; and yet have you no pity for me?"

"On the contrary," replied Vittoria, taking hold of her hand and pressing it to her lips, "we and every one in this castle are entirely at your service, and would assist you and protect you: so calm yourself, for the love of Heaven! you need fear no one here."

"Well then, if it be so," said Ginevra, again thrusting her feet out of the bed, "let me go—only let me go!"

Vittoria supposing that this desire to escape arose from vacillation of mind, and seeing too how feeble and exhausted she was, endeavoured by kind words to persuade her to have patience for a short time only. But abhorrence of that place had become a sort of mania with her, which was only increased by obstacles; whence she redoubled her efforts, and said, at the same time weeping, "Lady, for the love of God and the Holy Virgin! I only entreat to be taken out of this bed; throw me into the sea or into the flames,

but take me out of this bed. I shall give you but little trouble. A drop of water!—I am burning!—and let me be allowed to speak a few words with Mariano, the priest of St. Dominick. But I must go,—let me go away!”

So saying, she again rose from the bed, and was not opposed by Vittoria this time, as she saw her determination was so decided; and with some difficulty she and her attendants supported her, almost carrying her, up the staircase, and lodged her in a retired apartment of the castle, where a bed had been prepared by Gonsalvo's orders, into which, having been undressed, she was comfortably placed by her kind friends. She then gave a sigh, and said, “Lady, God knows everything; and he knows that in my heart I pray to him to reward you for your benevolence towards me. Holy Virgin, I thank thee! and you, my lady, you at least have it in your power to save me from dying in despair. I only entreat you to haste and send the priest Mariano to me. Tell me what is the hour,—is it day or night? I hardly know in what world I am.”

“It is the fifth hour of night,” answered Vittoria, “and Father Mariano shall be sent for. But your terror causes you to fear more than there is occasion for: calm yourself; try to repose awhile, my dear young friend; you are in perfect safety here; I will not leave you.”

“Oh no, do not leave me! If you but knew the refreshment I feel from those compassionate eyes of yours!—Here, sit down on my bed: look, I can make room for you by drawing nearer to the wall. *No, no! do not fear annoying me; it will only make*

me the more comfortable." Here she began again to be bewildered; and shivering with renewed terror, she went on as though she knew not what she was saying. "Oh, if you did but know the horror!—to be interred alive!—to be suffocated under a heap of dead bodies!—to see oneself stared at by those corpses, full of putrefaction, but still grinning!—Oh, Heaven! methinks I am there still!" And saying these words, she threw herself into the arms of her protectress, who being aware that it was useless to argue with her in this delirium, embraced and affectionately endeavoured to pacify her.

"O my lady!" continued Ginevra, hiding her face in Vittoria's bosom, "I know not what I am saying. I believe I am talking wildly; but I have suffered too cruelly—too cruelly! and I did not deserve such punishment. No. What had I done that I should have been so treated? And the Holy Virgin had promised to conduct me into safety—I prayed to her so earnestly—and then to abandon me! 'Tis true I have been a wretch, but more unhappy than culpable—oh yes! far more unhappy! for I know in my heart what I have felt—and what I have suffered no one on earth can know."

"Yes, love, I believe it," replied Vittoria; "but do compose yourself, and do not say that the Virgin has forsaken you. Do you not see that she has sent me to dry up your tears and console you in your troubles? I am here with you; I have said I will not leave you; do not suppose, then, that you are forsaken. But if your case require other assistance or redress; if there be any villain who should be chastised for committing outrage against you; if

there have been an injury capable of remedy—speak! confide in me. My father, Fabrizio Colonna, Gon-salvo, all—all would offer themselves.”

“ Ah, my lady!” interrupted Ginevra, “ the whole world could not confer upon me a moment’s happiness, nor diminish my complaint in the slightest degree. As to this world, all is over with me. I thank you, nevertheless—Oh! how I thank you, that you have enabled me to feel the last consolation! And do not think me ungrateful if I tell not my misfortunes to you: it would be impossible. No, they cannot be told; and if I accept not your kind offers, may God reward you for them! he alone can: I am but able to thank you and to kiss these blessed hands, which will support my head at the last hour, and will close my eyes. Promise me that you will not leave me until this body shall be cold clay.”

Vittoria wished to banish these mournful ideas from her mind, and persuade her that her life was not in immediate danger; but Ginevra would not allow her to speak.

“ No, no, my lady; all is useless. I know what has been; I know how I feel. Deny me not this last favour, my guardian angel!—Do you really not refuse? Look! see how I profit by your kindness! you cannot call me proud or ungrateful.—Then you will promise me?”

“ Yes, yes, dear one! I promise you—if there shall be occasion.”

“ Ah! now I feel more tranquil; now let Brother Mariano come, and then all will be over here. Yet give me one drop of water, for methinks I feel burning coals in my heart. And that light—if you would

but remove it from before me,—it dazzles me. Forgive this restlessness of mine, it will last but a little while."

Vittoria having done these slight services for her, returned to her seat on the bedside, and after a short interval Inigo, who had gone to call up Brother Mariano, came to the door and knocked, inquiring if the priest should enter.

"Let him come! let him come!" said Ginevra.

There appeared in the doorway a priest of lofty stature, whose pallid and modest countenance was half concealed under his cowl: he approached the bedside saying, "Jesus protect you, lady!" On this the rest all went out, leaving him alone with Ginevra. The presence of this holy man, his manner, full of that glowing charity which is kindled by the knowledge of how divine and dignified a mission it is to comfort man in his wretchedness, showed at first sight that for a long time he had trampled under foot all worldly views and worldly passions. His history was unknown to the inhabitants of Barletta, and even to the monks and priests of the monastery of St. Dominick, in which, without being in orders, he resided, surrounded by universal respect, which was excited by his piety, his learning, and the persuasion that he was the victim of religious persecution. It was whispered that he had been in his time one of the principal citizens of Florence, of the *soi-disant* sect of the Piagnoni, of which Girolamo Savonarola was the head; that, overcome by the words of that terrible preacher, he had abandoned worldly things, and taken, from his hands, the Dominican habit in the church of St. Mark. With these facts, which

were generally considered authentic, other reports more doubtful were mixed up, that in order to devote himself to religion he had broken the ties of affection. It was said that this sudden conversion had been the cause of serious scandals, of indignation and vows of vengeance on the part of the forsaken lady; that by her means he had been involved in the persecution carried on against Savonarola by the Court of Rome; and that after that person's death, he was with difficulty saved by the care of his superiors, who had procured his escape in disguise and sent him under a feigned name to the monastery of Barletta, where, from its being a place little frequented and out of the way, he lived unknown. These were the reports respecting his previous life. But as to other matters, the most cunning malevolence would in vain have sought to cast a blemish on his fair fame. The severe doctrines of Savonarola had found his heart a soil ready prepared for the seed of virtue, and aided by a disposition ready to sacrifice anything for the truth, it had borne the fruits of charity and the most ardent zeal. The burning pile which had reduced his master's frame to ashes had, so to speak, consumed at the same time the whole sect; fear of the Papal vengeance had silenced those who detested the corruptions of the Court of Rome. Father Mariano lived tranquilly in his retirement, and though God had not thought him worthy of martyrdom in the cause of truth, the priest was contented in not being obliged to remain an idle witness of wickedness, against which it was not permitted him to raise his humble voice.

Seated near the pillow of the unfortunate lady he

gave her his blessing, and inquired whether she wished to confess.

Oh yes, father!" replied Ginevra; "I have no other desire in the world: had I not felt my strength and life failing me, I would not have caused you such trouble at this untimely hour; but I shall not be long here, therefore I would not waste my precious time; let me but die reconciled to my God and the Holy Church of Rome!"

"Life and death are in the hands of God," said Brother Mariano, "and what he wills, will be: on your part do what is in your power, and doubt not that He will extend His aid to you." And making the sign of the cross, and repeating the customary prayers, he said, "Now speak, my child."

To open to him the very depths of her heart, it was necessary to relate the history of her life, her ill-omened marriage, her supposed death, and her wanderings from place to place. Her narrative was frequently interrupted by swoons, and was in parts unconnected, for her head could ill support so laborious and exciting a task. "Father," said she towards the conclusion, "I have for several years past, it is true, resided near one who was not my husband, but I have not been guilty otherwise than in exposing myself to the danger of guilt, from which God has been pleased to deliver me. I have been negligent in not seeking for my husband and gaining certain intelligence as to whether he was dead. At last I found him, and immediately resolved to return to him: I began executing my intentions; I hoped with the aid of the Virgin to succeed in them; but, O God! into what a situation have I fallen!"

She then related to Brother Mariano how, on coming to land at the base of the citadel, she had witnessed the close dialogue between Hector and Elvira, and how, overcome with grief at the sight, she had fainted and fallen in the boat, and had not revived until she found herself in Valentino's apartment; and having unfolded the horrors of her tale to its conclusion, she wept and sobbed convulsively and despairingly, and uttered exclamations and unconnected sentences that showed too plainly an incipient aberration of mind. With the strongest and deepest emotion the good priest, with the prudence which the importance of the case demanded, used all possible means to bring her back to a calm state of mind, and only succeeded partially and after a length of time, when nature was wearied with the struggles of the paroxysm, which left her even feebler and more reduced than previously.

"Father," proceeded Ginevra in a fainter tone, "is it possible then that God and the Virgin have refused my tears, and sent their curse upon my sorrow? The wrath of Heaven has fallen on my head like a thunderbolt when methought it promised me mercy; the punishment of my sins has been immense already, but I dread another more tremendous: I feel that I am dying in despair of obtaining pardon; I feel that God is hardening my heart in these last moments; I am about to pass away, and yet can neither forget that man nor pardon her. Oh, pray for me! help me, whilst there is time speak to me of hope!"

"Of hope!" interrupted the priest; "know you not that *He* who sends it to you is that God who

purchased your salvation by the death of the cross; who promises you his mercy, and would promise it if you were laden with the sins of the whole world, provided you offend him not by despairing of his forgiveness? And what does he require of you in order to merit this forgiveness,—to merit also that crown of glory and of joy which shall have no end? He requires you to love him as he has loved you; to suffer a little for his sake, as he has suffered infinitely for yours; to forgive those who have wronged you, as he also forgave persecutions, stripes, insults, and death. Behold him in heaven, panting with the expectation of receiving you in his arms, of wiping away your tears, and changing them into immeasurable joy! The arch-enemy, who held you as his own, cannot bear that you should escape out of his hands: he is trying every means of dragging you into his power; he is endeavouring to deprive you of hope; but his iniquity shall not succeed. I, the minister of the Everlasting God," (said he, standing erect, and with solemn dignity extending his hands above Ginevra's head,) "swear to you by his Sacred Name that together with your pardon there is written in the book of life your eternal salvation, if by one single act of love you know how to purchase so great a reward. May the divine blood of the Word descend like heavenly dew upon your soul; may it wash away every stain, and infuse into you peace and joy, together with the sorrow of having offended him who shed it for you; and may it give you strength to repel and despise the assaults of that enemy who wishes for your destruction!"

"O father!" exclaimed Ginevra, seized with re-

verence for him from the words he uttered, "God speaks through your mouth to me. Then there is still hope for me, and I am not abandoned for ever?"

"No, blessed soul! on the contrary, the severer the struggle, the more glorious will be the prize. But now that God grants you his grace, and the opportunity of considering your guilt and his mercies, take heed that you fall not back: remember what he has said, 'that it would be better for those never to have known the ways of righteousness who, after having known them, wander from their way;' 'that he who puts his hand to the plough and then leaves it, is unworthy of his hire.' And that man—can you not efface his image from your heart? See in whom you have placed your hopes, and from whom you expected joy and comfort! see for whom you have despised the love of God! For one who has not even kept that worldly, that culpable faith which he promised you, who has passed away like the breeze, and cares no longer for you. Thus does the world keep its promises; and yet, notwithstanding, for the sake of this man you can slight the unfailing promises of the Eternal! and when he stretches out his hand and gives you striking proof of the vanity of your desires, you will show disdain instead of prostrating yourself before this miracle of mercy? And can you not forgive her? In what has she offended you? In the first place, she is not even acquainted with you, and then she is a free maiden, who may indulge such thoughts without crime. Oh! how much rather ought you to love her and to adore her as an instrument used by Providence for your salvation! I also

have been and am a sinner; I was wretchedly blind in seeking for peace of the heart in created beings. God called to me; I followed his voice at first in bitterness; but since then what a rich compensation has not Divine goodness granted me for this trifling sacrifice! What tranquil joy is there in loving and being certain of an eternal and infinite return! Oh! believe me, blessed soul; for I am a man and more sinful than you, and have been tried by experience, and I find that all is bitterness, doubt, and darkness, save to love God, to serve him, and to hope in his mercies!"

"Oh yes!" said Ginevra, interrupting him, and bursting into a flood of tears; "you have opened my mind, you have conquered me. Yes, I forgive—forgive with all my soul, and will give proof of it. Let her come to me; let me see her before I die, and embrace her; and may they live together in happiness as I hope for God's pity on me in a future life!"

The holy man fell on his knees beside her couch, and lifting up his eyes and hands to heaven, said, "*Variis et miris modis vocat nos Deus!* Let us adore the work of his mercy!" After remaining in this attitude of prayer a few moments, he rose and gave the lady benediction and absolution. He continued, "You are truly resolved, then, to see her, and perform this work of Paradise?"

"Yes, father; bring her to me; I feel that I have need of dying in the act of forgiveness."

"And God—I promise it in his name—has already forgiven you, and you are already his own; this holy intention is the sign of your salvation."

The priest was about to go in search of Donna El-

vira. Ginevra called him back. "One favour," said she, "I have to ask of you, and you must not refuse it, if you would that I die in peace. When I shall be no more, go to the French camp, find out my husband; he is called in the army Grajano d'Asti, and is in the pay of the Duke of Nemours: tell him that at my last hour I have entreated forgiveness from God, and that I entreat it from him if I have offended him: tell him that in this awful situation I swear to him that my soul on leaving this life is pure as it was when he received me from the hand of my father; tell him not to curse my memory, but to cause a mass to be said for my soul!"

"God bless you! compose yourself; your wish shall be gratified."

"One other favour I would fain ask of you," proceeded Ginevra; "I know not if it be right or sinful, but God, who sees my heart, knows that my intention is not evil. I would wish you to seek him also—I mean Hector Fieramosca; he is a free lance under Signor Prospero. Tell him that I will pray for him and that I forgive him—that is—no, do not mention forgiveness, for after all I may not be quite certain,—it might have been some other person, who resembled him—no, no, tell him only to think of the welfare of his soul; that I now know how we strayed from the right path: tell him to think of another life; that this one passes away like a vapour, and that she tells him so who is at her last trial, and wishes him—tell him to think of his true happiness. Say, too, that if God in his mercy shall receive me, as I have confident hope he will, I will pray for him, that he may be victorious in the combat, and

that the honour of the Italian arms may be maintained."

Brother Mariano sighed deeply, and said, "Also this will I do."

The dying lady was silent for a while, and Zoraide her *protégée* came to her mind, with whom the few preceding days had been spent with not altogether pleasant feelings. She begged the priest to go to the Convent of St. Ursula, and visit her, and to be the bearer of a necklace and her last good wishes, and to ask Zoraide to wear it for her sake: she recommended the poor deserted maiden to his care, and asked him to place her in some honourable retreat, and above all that he would endeavour to convert her to Christianity. After which she said, "One other and last kindness I entreat of you, and I am certain you will not deny it to me. Let me be interred in the subterranean chapel of the church at St. Ursula, clothed in the habits of that convent. I feel consolation in the thought that I shall repose in peace near the image of the Virgin, who has at last listened to my prayers and put an end to my wretchedness."

"Yes," said Brother Mariano, with difficulty restraining his tears, "all these wishes shall be fulfilled."

On saying this he left the room, and bringing in Vittoria Colonna, explained to her Ginevra's wish, to prevent the latter speaking, for her strength was failing fast and she was fatigued with the past conversation. "Lady," said he, "I pray you go in search of Donna Elvira, and conduct her hither, for this poor child would fain speak with her." Vittoria did not expect this, and hesitated a little, but went away

without replying, whilst Ginevra said to her, "Pardon this restlessness of mine, but there is no time to be lost."

It was about the fourth hour of night when the ball was concluded. The brilliant apartments were gradually deserted, and the company descended the staircase on their departure, escorted by the knights of the Spanish army. The Duke of Nemours and his French cavaliers took leave of Gonsalvo, and returned to their camp accompanied by a number of men with torches. In the court-yard there was a swarming of people both on foot and on horseback, a trampling and noise which resounded through the castle. The different ladies mounted behind the gentlemen of their party, according to the custom of that time; and both the crowd and rumour diminishing by degrees, the court was in a short time deserted, save by some servant passing across it, engaged in his menial duties. There was then an opening and shutting of doors, a glancing of lights along the galleries and from the windows; and at last, when the clock struck six, the guard at the gate raised the drawbridge leading to the square, and the creaking of its chains having ceased, a silence succeeded, which was not afterwards interrupted for the remainder of the night.

Vittoria walked through the suite of apartments lately the scene of festivity, where the servants were busied in extinguishing the lights and placing the furniture in order, and reached the chamber of Donna Elvira just as she had retired and was beginning to take off her ball-dress and ornaments. She found her thus occupied, and assisted by her two maids,

whose attentions, from the pettish manner in which they were received, appeared by no means acceptable. She was heated, her countenance was flushed, and altogether she had the appearance of being anything but satisfied with the amusements of the evening. On seeing Vittoria enter, an inward feeling, produced perchance by a little concealed remorse, gave her the notion that her friend was about to speak in a tone that she could with difficulty have supported just at that moment. This occasioned her to receive Vittoria with a look of surprise, in which a certain degree of impatience was not entirely hidden. Vittoria perceived this, but took no notice of it; she spoke kindly to her, and entreated her as a favour to delay retiring to rest for a quarter of an hour, and to come to the bedside of Ginevra, who wished to speak with her. It was necessary to explain to her how that unfortunate lady came to be there; and Gonsalvo's daughter, who, like giddy-headed characters in general, possessed in reality a kind heart, immediately acceded; and the more willingly, as she thought things were not going to take the turn that she expected.

They came together to Ginevra's chamber, and entering it approached her bedside. Donna Elvira's beauty had never appeared so conspicuous when adorned by gay costume and studied head-dress as it now shone in the simple loveliness of her *deshabille* and with her long golden tresses unconfined and waving over her snowy neck and bosom. Father Mariano cast down his eyes, and poor Ginevra in looking on her felt an internal shudder and gave a sigh, to which the good priest could not refuse sympathy

and compassion. The three ladies remained silent for a few minutes, after which, Ginevra raising herself on her elbow said, "You may naturally be surprised at my boldness in disturbing you, not having the honour of knowing or being known to you; but to a person in my awful situation all these things are pardoned. Before, however, I speak with you more openly, I ought to ask permission to do so. May I speak a few words to you with freedom? Whatever may be your reply, it will be soon inclosed with me in the tomb; and may I speak in the presence of this lady, or would you wish that we should be alone?"

"Oh," said Donna Elvira, "this lady is the dearest friend I have, and she loves me much more than I deserve; so speak, my dear lady, for I have come on purpose to listen to you."

"Since it is so, and since you have given me leave, I have but this one question to put to you—"

She paused at this point, as if to gather up strength, and to determine on the phrase in which to express her wishes, but she hardly knew how to commence. Her intention of pardoning the person who had been the cause of all her agonizing grief had been established in the sincerity of her heart; but who would be severe enough to make it a crime in this unhappy creature, if, at the moment of becoming positively certain that her eyes had not deceived her, and that the young man she had seen at Donna Elvira's feet was really Hector, she felt an almost invincible repugnance to acquiring that certainty? Who would have the heart to condemn her, if she still nourished an indefinable hope that she might have been mis-

taken, and that she might still know that Hector remained unchanged? However this might be, we are disposed to think that these feelings could not have been entirely extinguished, and occasioned the brief hesitation which produced that moment of silence. At length she said resolutely, and with a clear and articulate voice, "Tell me, then,—and forgive me if I have dared to ask too much,—were you not this evening upon the terrace looking towards the sea, about the third hour, and was not Hector Fieramosca at your feet?"

This interrogation, as direct as it was unexpected, gave a shock to both the young females, although from different causes. Donna Elvira's complexion became the colour of fire; she remained silent and unable to utter a syllable. Ginevra looking her earnestly in the face at once comprehended the whole; she felt her blood run cold as ice, and continued, in an altered voice, "Lady! I am too bold, I know it; but see, I am dying; and I entreat you, by that pardon which we all hope for in another life, not to deny me this favour. Answer me. Was it you?—was it he?"

Donna Elvira thought she must be dreaming; she directed a timid glance at Vittoria, who, reading in her eyes the fear of her severity, and knowing that it was no time for showing it then, embraced her, and without speaking a word encouraged her to reply. Ginevra felt that she was dying in uncertainty: she extended her open and trembling hands to the young maiden, and with a voice that might be called a cry of despair, repeated, "Well, then?"

Donna Elvira clung tremblingly to her friend,

cast down her eyes, and answered,—“ Yes, it was both.”

The countenance of the miserable Ginevra at once changed to a haggard death-like appearance; yet she made a last effort, and raising herself in a sitting position she took Donna Elvira's hand, drew her near, threw her arms round her neck, and faintly said, “ May God then bless you, and render both of you happy!”

The last word was hardly distinguished, and perhaps was not completely articulated, before her soul received in heaven the reward of the most arduous victory a woman can obtain over herself, that of granting the most generous and difficult forgiveness of which the human heart is capable. Her arms folded round the neck of Gonsalvo's daughter, losing all power, fell back together with the body, which sunk lifeless on the bed. Her face instantly assumed the expression and hue of death; the two ladies perceived it and uttered a cry. The priest stood for some moments as if without breathing; at last, clasping his hands, he exclaimed, “ This is the semblance of Paradise!” Afterwards all three, kneeling down, joined in a prayer for the repose of that soul which so much needed it, and had done and suffered so much towards meriting it. They crossed her hands over her bosom, and Father Mariano, placing between her fingers the chaplet of beads which he had at his girdle and a lamp at her feet, said, “ *Requiescat in pace!*” Then praying in his heart for her, and turning to her as if to ask for her intercession, as of a soul that he was certain must be in the place of salvation, he conducted the two ladies out of the mournful chamber,

and himself returned to the bedside of the deceased, to spend there in devotion the hours which remained before daybreak.

One of Gonsalvo's principal views in consenting to the combats about to take place between the Spaniards and French, and the Italians and French, had been to gain time for the arrival of the reinforcement he was expecting from Spain by sea, without which, being too inferior in point of strength to the French army, he had been obliged to shut himself up in Barletta, and was unable to venture upon any action of importance. In the course of that very day on which the French barons had been his guests, letters were brought to him announcing the approach of several ships full of men, which having passed Point Reggio, could not be long in appearing off Barletta. Knowing, therefore, that any longer delay would now be rather disadvantageous to him, in as much as his army would have time to lose the excitement produced by the arrival of fresh forces, he managed, in speaking to the Duke of Nemours and the other French knights on the subject of these challenges, to persuade them to fix the earliest day possible. It was thus decided that the combat with the Spaniards should take place the very next morning, on a space of ground by the sea-shore, about a mile from the gate leading to Bari; and that the Italian challenge should be fought on the third day, in a place which had been surveyed and thought suitable by Brancalone and Prospero Colonna, situated near the town of Quadrato, and halfway between Barletta and the French camp.

The cavaliers of both parties being informed by their Commanders of the decision that had been come

to, soon thought of their own affairs. Those of the French who were selected for the combat, leaving the ball, returned to their camp before the rest to give the necessary orders as to the battle; and the Spaniards likewise, each man retiring to his quarters, began making their preparations, so as to have some repose before morning. Inigo and Brancaleone heard this news at the time when, having placed poor Ginevra in that chamber from which she was not to come out alive, they were going for the priest. The former, who was one of the champions, was obliged to attend to his own concerns, and leave to his companion the task of finding Fieramosca, and helping him in his troubles. They shook hands on parting, and Inigo said, "How will he be able to fight the day after tomorrow, when this evening he has not strength to stand?"

Brancaleone only shook his head and bit his under lip by way of reply, but showed plainly by his countenance that he felt all the truth of the Spaniard's reflection. He then went away, and immediately took a boat, anxious to arrive quickly at the Convent, and tell Hector, as he had promised, what had been the result of their search. Before, however, describing the state in which he found his friend, whom he had left under such painful circumstances, we must relate the issue of the challenge given by the Spaniards.

The sun had scarcely risen more than an hour when the two parties of eleven men each took their stations in the field. Amongst the Spaniards, the most renowned were Inigo, Azevedo, Correa, the veteran Segredo, and Diego Garcia di Paredes; and

the others, though not so well known, were all good men-at-arms and excellent horsemen. Pedro of Navarre had been invested by Gonsalvo with the honourable office of Marshal on this occasion. The French in their body, amongst other distinguished men, reckoned Bayard, the ornament of chivalry in that age, and their Marshal was M. De la Palisse. The combat was maintained for a long time without advantage on either side. Segredo's bridle was at length cut in two by a sword-blow; and his horse, no longer under his command, set off at a furious pace, and was on the point of leaving the field. This case, provided for by the laws of combat, was considered equivalent to a defeat, and the man to whom it happened was compelled to yield himself prisoner. The brave Segredo, seeing his steed about to pass the barriers which were here marked out by large blocks of stone placed round the lists, threw himself off his horse; and although, from the difficulty of the feat, and perhaps also owing to age diminishing his agility, he sunk down on his knees, he defended himself boldly against two of his mounted adversaries, who attacked him in his disadvantageous position. But his sword happened to break in pieces, and he had no other arms within reach; and it being vain to attempt retreating amongst his comrades, who were at some distance, he was obliged to surrender and retire from the field. He had, however, conducted himself with so much gallantry, that he was praised and his misfortune compassionated by all. As the contest proceeded, after this accident, fortune appeared inclined to favour the Spanish party. Many of the French had their horses killed under them.

And here we should apprise the reader, that in spite of some ancient regulations of chivalry, it was very common, in challenges of this description, to make a previous stipulation to be allowed to kill the horses, partly that it might have more the appearance of deadly combat, in which such courteous rules were rarely attended to, and partly to exercise more completely the skill of the combatants. After two hours of fighting hand to hand, by command of the marshals the trumpets sounded, and the battle ceased awhile, to give each party a little breathing time.

All the Spaniards were still on horseback, and their troop was still complete in number, saving Segredo. Only one of the French had been made prisoner : in this, therefore, both were equal ; but seven of their horses lay dead upon the field. Bayard, however, was still in his saddle. After half an hour's rest the combat was renewed, and, spite of the efforts of the Spaniards, their antagonists maintained themselves, one might almost say, entrenched behind the carcasses of their steeds, over which the horses of their adversaries, although hard spurred, could not be induced to pass : so that after long and useless trouble and manœuvring, the French proposed that the battle should cease by agreement, with equal honour to both parties.

The obstinate defence of the French, and the difficulty of obtaining a complete victory over them, drawn up as they were behind the dead bodies of their chargers, had the effect of inclining the majority of the Spaniards to lend an ear to the proposal. But Diego Garcia would not bend : he cried out to

his comrades in a fury, telling them it would be shameful to retire before men half conquered, and that they ought to conclude the enterprise by proving that the Spaniards were better men than their adversaries on foot likewise; and, using no other weapon than his sword, he jumped off his horse in a rage, and lifting up the great stones that fixed the boundaries of the lists, and which a man of ordinary strength would scarcely have been able to move, he hurled them into the midst of the enemy's troop. It was not difficult, however, to get out of the way of them; consequently he could not even in this manner succeed in damaging his antagonists. Nevertheless the strife continued, and lasted until near sunset; and the French kept up their defence with such bravery and perseverance, that after all it was necessary for the two parties to remain where they were. The judges therefore decreed the honour of the day's battle to be equal, giving the credit to the Spaniards of having been the most valiant, and to the French of having been most firm. Both prisoners were ransomed, and all returned, weary, bruised and discontented, the one party to their camp and the other to the town.

It was almost night when the Spaniards entered Barletta. They dismounted at the castle, and having presented themselves before Gonsalvo, related to him how the affair had ended. The Great Captain seemed very much displeased, reproaching them for not managing to finish the enterprise well, when they had so well begun it. On this occasion Diego Garcia's noble and generous disposition displayed itself in all its brightness. He who in the field had

even bitterly reproved his companions for leaving the combat incomplete, now, in Gonsalvo's presence, boldly took upon himself their defence, saying that they had done all in the power of brave men as they were, and conducted to an end their enterprise, which was to make the French acknowledge that the Spaniards were their equals in combat on horseback. But Gonsalvo accepted this excuse pettishly, and dismissed them, cutting short Garcia's words with this answer, "*Por mejores os embié yo al campo* *."

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE shall now resume the thread of events which occurred the preceding evening to Brancaloneo after leaving Inigo to return to Fieramosca. When he landed at the island of St. Ursula, the ardour he felt during his voyage for arriving there quickly had cooled, on his considering the manner in which he ought to announce Ginevra's misfortunes to Hector, and the state in which he had parted from him. He slowly ascended the steps leading up to the esplanade of the Convent, putting his thoughts into some sort of form the while, and walked towards the strangers' lodge. But the speech which he had prepared proved useless. On entering the chamber, he beheld Zoraide seated beside the couch, beckoning to him not to make a noise, and Hector in a deep sleep. He drew back softly, whilst the maiden, standing up and giving a glance at Fieramosca to see that he was

* 'I sent you into the field as their superiors.'

still undisturbed, came out on tiptoe and followed Brancaleone into one of the adjoining apartments.

"All is going on well," said Zoraide; "tomorrow Hector will be as well as if there had been nothing the matter with him. But Ginevra, where is she? Have you found any traces of her?"

Brancaleone's breath returned to his body on hearing such good news of Fieramosca, and he replied, "Ginevra is in the citadel, and in good hands; tomorrow you may possibly see her: but tell me, will Hector be really cured by tomorrow? the day after tomorrow the combat is to take place."

"Well, he shall fight."

There was a certain mysterious tone and expression accompanying Zoraide's words which made him desirous of knowing more precisely the nature of his friend's complaint. He heard that it was a wound, but a slight one, in the neck; without, however, any mention being made by Zoraide of the poisoned dagger. Nevertheless, perceiving that the expression of the lady's countenance was not quite natural, he proceeded to question her, but could not draw from her any clearer explanations.

"There is a fable amongst us in the East," said Zoraide with a melancholy smile, "which tells of a lion of the desert whose life was saved by a mouse. More I cannot say; only, be satisfied in knowing that within a few hours Hector's arm will be as strong as the neck of a wild bull. Now, however, there is nothing to be done but to keep him in quiet and repose; tomorrow he shall be awakened in time to make his preparations. I shall return to his bedside to attend to his wants; trust everything to me:

I am skilful in healing wounds, and have had to cure far more dangerous ones."

Brancaleone seeing that he could be of no further use at present to the wounded youth, advised Zoraida, as soon as Hector awoke, to comfort him respecting Ginevra, and to inform him that the day of combat was fixed for the morrow, and also to tell him that he himself would come again about mid-day if Hector should not previously have arrived in the town. Having arranged matters in this way, he returned to Barletta; and before going to his house, he turned towards the castle to gain tidings respecting Ginevra's state. But he found the gates closed and the drawbridge raised, so that he was compelled to delay obtaining his information till after daybreak.

Soon after dawn he ran there in haste, and found the eleven Spanish warriors just setting out on their way to the field, followed by all who were at liberty to accompany them; and very few persons remained in the castle. He ascended the staircase without meeting a single person who could give him the information. He arrived at the very door where he had left Ginevra the evening before, and knocked. Father Mariano, who had passed the night there, opened it, and drawing him into the next chamber, related the melancholy tale to Brancaleone. He was the more troubled and afflicted by this sad intelligence, as he saw this misfortune befall his friend at the very time when he was least able to bear it, and when by reason of the approaching combat all his strength would be called in requisition: he feared that, weakened by this accumulation of sorrow, he might not be equal to himself in this arduous and important trial of

strength and skill. He thought, however, of a remedy: he agreed with the priest, that the latter should conceal Ginevra's death through the whole of that day, and only on the following morning assume the charge of transporting the body of the deceased to the Convent, according to her last wish, at the time when Hector and his comrades would be engaged in battle. They thought that this secret might easily be kept for one day, as the citadel was almost deserted; and they deemed it better to tell Gonsalvo alone, in order to gain his permission for the funeral obsequies to be performed with the usual honourable ceremonies. With regard to Fieramosca, who would certainly require some explanation, they agreed that Brancalone should tell him Ginevra was well, that she could not see him that day, but that she entreated him to recollect the honour of Italy, and to fight with the valour called for by such an occasion, and that she would pray for him and his comrades; all this they might say without falsehood, and it was of a nature to comfort him and make him go boldly into battle.

Having concerted these important matters, Brancalone descended into the square, and soon arrived at the house of the brothers Colonna, where he found them both in the court-yard, with the Italian champions assembled, and reviewing minutely their arms, horses, and trappings, in order that everything should be in complete readiness on the following morning, and that there should be no part of their harness which had not been proved. Brancalone, who had received notice of this rendezvous, had sent there his esquires and those of Fieramosca with their horses

and armour. But there was no Fieramosca, and to the interrogations respecting him, all answered that they had not seen him and knew nothing about him. Prospero Colonna heard this intelligence with surprise, which soon changed to displeasure ; and when Brancaleone appeared, he inquired with a stern countenance, "Where is Fieramosca, that he does not make his appearance here?"

"Your Excellency," replied Brancaleone, "he will be here in a few moments : his delay is involuntary ; an unforeseen and important affair—"

"What can be more important to him than the affair of tomorrow?" interrupted Signor Prospero ; "I could not have believed that he would have given a thought to anything else."

Fanfulla, remembering the events of the preceding evening, and wishing to find occasion for turning the conversation to them, said laughingly, "Oh! he danced too much last night, perhaps ; or probably he has met with some new nail to drive out the old one : but then he ought to know that a man who climbs too fast—"

"Met with the plague which I hope may seize you," interposed Brancaleone ; "do you think every one is a mad fellow like you? I assure Your Excellency upon my honour that without doubt he will be here in a very short time, and to be certain I will go and hasten him." He thought this the surest plan, since, though he could confide in Zoraide, he feared some fresh obstacle might have arisen to prevent him. He went down to the harbour, to make another voyage to the island. As he was getting into a boat,

and was pushing off from the shore, another boat appeared from behind the mole, in which to his great joy he saw Hector; and the latter recognising him, jumped on land, came up to him, and immediately asked, "Where is Ginevra?—is she ill?—what has happened to her? Quick! quick! let us go to her."

"Quick! let us go to the Signors Colonna; *they* are only waiting for you, and Ginevra is well, and you can see *her* afterwards."

"Well? how happy I am! but we must go to her."

"But has not Zoraide told you that we are to fight tomorrow?"

"Yes, yes, we will fight; but now for Heaven's sake lead me to Ginevra."

"You cannot see her now, nor during this day."

"And I tell you—"

"If you will not listen to me, nor let me speak, we shall never have done. You must know, then—(this is from her; not that I have seen her, but she has sent a message for you)—she is well; the Lady Vittoria has received and comforted her, affording her those kind offices which her case required, and she has wanted nothing: she entreats you not to seek to see her today, but to have one thought only; to be calm, to combat tomorrow like yourself, to keep in mind the honour of Italy, and all that you and she have talked of together on that subject, and she will pray God that we may be victorious."

"But, oh! why am I not to see her? I am sure there is something hidden from me."

"I tell you there is no such thing: if I were inclined to describe to you all the events of yesterday

it would be out of my power, for I am not acquainted with them; but for Heaven's sake be contented for the present with being told that she is safe: you will know everything after the battle; and now there is no time to think of aught beside. Let us go, for Signor Prospero and the others have been expecting and inquiring for you, and are wondering at your doings, and your absence at such a moment. Come along, courage! be like a man, as you have always been: it would be a vile thing to trample under foot your honour and your well-merited reputation as a brave soldier."

"Well, well, let us go," replied Fieramosca, half angry; "I am not a horse to require such spurring; I only asked to see her for one minute, and is the sky to fall for that?"

"Oh, the sky fall! You do not seem to understand that they have been assembled for an hour past at the review, and you alone are wanting. Why, what can they think?"

"On, then!" said Fieramosca, quickening his pace; (for all this dialogue had taken place whilst they were walking slowly along, one wishing to go towards the castle, and the other to drag him to the house of Colonna;) "I will go, for you are in the right. Duty and honour before everything."

Whilst walking on at a quick pace, Brancaleone said, "Well, how do you feel? What about the wound?"

"Oh! it is nothing; but I will tell you of that presently, for I have not time now. What diabolical doings!—and that poor Zoraide—! She would not acknowledge anything, but I comprehend too well

how it was, from what I felt: the dagger must have been poisoned, and I cannot help thinking that she has sucked the wound, and so restored me to health, and perhaps to life: this was too much, but I fear it was the case. I have been in such a senseless state, that I can scarcely distinguish whether this is recollection on my part, or only a dream."

"But do you really feel quite well?"

"Just as if I had never been ill."

So saying, they entered the court-yard, and presented themselves before Prospero Colonna, who after some brief remarks on Fieramosca's tardiness, proceeded in his important employment. The careful and minute attention required in this review caused it to last several hours. The horses were examined and exercised, and the armour proved by blows of the lance, axe, and sword: the edge of the cutting weapons of offence was tried upon wood, and the imperfect ones rejected. Towards noon every one returned to his quarters excepting Hector, who was detained under pretence of finally arranging the terms of the challenge and the laws of the combat, but in reality to prevent his attending to his own private concerns. Brancalone had drawn aside Signor Prospero, and informing him of everything, begged him to manage so that Fieramosca should be kept employed during the rest of the day; which plan was afterwards duly executed by him. The evening coming on, when there no longer remained any reasonable pretext for detaining him, he was allowed to go; and Brancalone, accompanying him to his house, entered into conversation with him on subjects of knightly skill, and on the particular mode of combat

which they should adopt the next morning against their enemies ; and he succeeded so well in engaging Hector's attention, that his fancy had not the opportunity of running where his heart called it. Whilst they were passing through the square, the troop of Spanish champions arrived ; they accordingly went up to them, asking for and listening to their account of the day's battle. The time flew quickly in this manner, and they did not arrive at their homes until it was quite dark.

"Those French devils have hard bones," said Hector, separating from his friend ; "and it seems the Spaniards have had tough work in gnawing them."

"So much the better," replied Brancaloneo ; "we shall have to act like men, and we have not been under the Colonna banner for nothing. As for me, I hope tomorrow to do as much as two : only think what those Orsinese* rogues would say, if they heard that we had been worsted ; how that poltroon the Count di Pitigliano would laugh at us ! but this time they shall not have the opportunity."

"Oh no," said Fieramosca ; "and perhaps some of these Frenchmen may be sorry that they ever wished to have a taste of Puglian figs. But we must now think of resting a little during the next few hours, and of showing tomorrow that if the poor Italians are ever ready to commit assassinations, it is only because their unhappy destiny so wills it ; and as for the rest, man to man, we neither fear them nor

* The adherents of the family of Orsino, before alluded to as rivals of the Colonna party.

the rest of the world. Adieu, Brancalone ! I know what you would be saying," continued he, smiling ; "do not be afraid : until tomorrow evening my only thought will be of the business we have in hand, and I swear to you that my blood boils more at this moment than it did the day on which the challenge was given, and I trust I shall not disgrace either Italy or you !"

"Of that I am more than certain," answered Brancalone,— "Adieu till tomorrow !"

"Adieu till tomorrow !" repeated Fieramosca, pressing his hand ; and they parted.

Before retiring to his chamber, Fieramosca wished to peep into his stables, and on entering them, he began caressing his favourite war-horse with that kindness, I might almost say friendship, which every soldier feels for the companion of his toils and dangers. He passed his hand over its neck and haunches, patting it gently, whilst the animal, throwing back its ears, and shaking its head, pretended in sport to snap at its master. The latter said, "Eat ! my poor Airone ; eat, and make a good supper, for it is not so certain that thou wilt sleep tomorrow night on this straw. On any other occasion I would take out Boccanera, and would not risk thy precious skin ; but tomorrow I shall have need of thee under me, and thou wilt not make a single stumble, I am sure." Then taking its nose in his hands, and laughing, he said, "Thou art a true Italian, thou too must bear the cross." Having seen that everything was in readiness, "Masuccio," said he, turning to his squire, "at the fourth hour let

him have a drink, and after that as much corn as he can eat: at the fifth hour you must come and arm me."

When he had given these orders he went up-stairs, and after a few minutes had put out his light and found himself in bed, resolutely determined to rest and sleep. At first he imagined he should soon fall asleep, but one thought sprung up in his brain, then another and another, and two hours passed without his having closed his eyes for a minute. The whole affair of Ginevra, respecting which he had in some degree quieted himself on the faith of Brancaleone's assertions, appeared to him now full of darkness and suspicion: a thousand doubts and fears crowded into his mind; "Why," thought he, "all this mystery? why am I to know nothing till tomorrow? would Brancaleone deceive me?" For a moment he was almost ready to curse in his heart the challenge; but the thought was repelled with indignation before it was fully formed. "O shame, shame!" said he to himself, sitting up in his bed, "how can such baseness enter my head? Am I not what I was formerly? What would Ginevra say if she saw such a miserable change in me? so cold at a thought which at one time would have sent fire running through my veins?" He was so enraged at himself with these reflections, that he got up in a fury and put on his clothes: for not being able to sleep, his bed became intolerable to him, and he went out upon the terrace: there, seated in his customary place on the little wall beneath the palm-tree, he resolved to wait for day-break, which was not then far off.

The pale waning moon was scarcely reflected in

the sea. About five hundred yards to his left rose the citadel, whose outlines were barely distinguishable at that hour, and which presented itself to his sight like one enormous dark mass, the battlements on the summits of the towers alone appearing distinct against the sky. Hector sighed and looked towards those walls, thinking on her who was inclosed within them; and every now and then he fancied that he heard the distant sound of solemn chaunting wafted from them. But it was so far off that he fancied and did not fancy it: at one of the windows, which, from being on the flank of the castle, he could only see foreshortened, he perceived a light which was not extinguished during the whole night; he would have given worlds not to have seen that light, and turned away his eyes, thinking within himself that he was mad to indulge in such fancies. Still he could not prevent his eyes reverting continually to that direction, and the light was still there. With that species of deception which man frequently uses against himself when tormented with any importunate doubt, he endeavoured to persuade himself of what in the inmost recesses of his heart he entirely disbelieved, namely, that Ginevra was quite well, that no new misfortune had befallen her, and that all the mystery which he thought he perceived in this affair was a mere fancy of his own, a phantom of his imagination. But if he took so much trouble to deceive himself, it was because he knew that if he would turn all his thoughts and all his virtuous feelings to the approaching combat, it was indispensable for him to render certain, or at least probable, the very thing which his reason told him to be a pure delusion.

"Yes, yes," said he, shaking his head, and passing his hand over his forehead and through his locks, as if thereby to dissipate the thoughts which oppressed him, "I must look to my honour before everything; and perhaps by this time tomorrow I shall have said to her, '*Ginevra, we have conquered!*'" Then pausing for a moment in thought,—"*Or she may have seen me enter Barletta stretched upon a bier, and may have said, 'Poor Hector, thou hast done thy best!' And if this should happen, I shall have died the death of a brave man; nor would she ever wish me to live, to purchase my life by dishonour. On the other hand, she would with pride say, 'We were friends from our very childhood.' Yes: but then she would live here in solitude, without a friend to assist her; not knowing that her husband is alive, and in the French camp; and even if she did know it, how could she return to him after such an absence?*"

Hector had formed and partly executed the scheme of recommending her to the care of Brancaleone; but the reflection occurred to him that Brancaleone might also lose his life in the combat; he therefore resolved to write a letter to Prospero Colonna, and therein direct that his small property in Capua, consisting of his house and a small estate, and also his suits of armour and stud of horses, which of themselves were worth some thousand ducats, should all go to Maria Ginevra Rossi di Monreale. He relighted his lamp, and in a short time had finished the letter: he then thought of inclosing another for Ginevra as a last adieu, and in order to recommend to her protection the Saracen lady to whom he had such strong

motives for being grateful; but as the cocks were already crowing, and he could distinguish the noise below of the grooms stirring in the stables, he had only time to write the following lines :

"Ginevra! I am about to mount my horse, and know not whether I may leave my saddle this evening alive. If Heaven has so decreed, I doubt not but that after having bestowed a tear to the memory of him who has been a faithful friend and servant to you since his childhood, you will rejoice that he has met with a death than which none can be more sublime or glorious. You will not refuse to accept for my sake the little property belonging to my house which I shall leave: you know that I am a bachelor, and have no near relations. I only recommend to you, and I must do it briefly, my servant Masuccio, who from the day in which he received a wound in the shoulder at Ofanto, can do little for himself, and might, for want of assistance from you, have to beg his bread from the hand of charity, which would do little honour to my memory. One thing more remains for me to tell you. Your husband is in the service of the Duke of Nemours. I have not time for more. I can hear that the signal is about to be given from Signor Colonna's house. May God protect you! I also recommend Zoraide to your care.

"HECTOR."

In fact, at that instant he heard the trumpeter, who, according to custom, preparing himself to sound the *reveille*, put his instrument to his lips and blew a few brief and interrupted sounds, by way of pre-

vious trial. A buzz and murmur, and tramping noise, which came up faintly from the ground-floor of his house and those of his neighbours, indistinct voices, and the steps of men and horses through the streets, warned him that the greater part of those who were to be actors in, and spectators of, this passage of arms had begun to put themselves in motion. In the sky, however, no sign of dawn had yet appeared ; on the contrary, a dark mist concealed the stars and thickened the atmosphere.

Fieramosca, who was engaged in sealing the two letters, seated near the window, became aware of this on looking out where the little ray from his light diverging shone upon that part of the mist which it reached. The unpleasant appearance of the weather, finding him already disposed to sadness, only increased it. The bats, which flew rapidly and tremblingly past the window, allured there by the light ; the sentinels posted on the towers of the castle, who, as the hour for relieving guard approached, were hailing each other with a mournful sort of cry ; all, in fact, united in accumulating sorrow upon this hour, and the distracted youth was for a moment completely overcome by it. But the heavy resounding steps of two men who ascended his stairs and were entering his apartment, roused him and made him lift up his face, and assume as much cheerfulness and boldness as possible, so that they might not discover the real state of his mind.

Brancaleone appeared, completely armed excepting his head, and accompanied by Masuccio bearing Fieramosca's armour. The bell of St. Dominick's

church was already sounding for the mass, which was to be attended by the combatants before they set out for the field.

"Arm yourself, Hector! for they will all be in the church in a few minutes," said Brancaleone; and aided by Masuccio, he very soon cased his friend in the complete and highly burnished suit of armour which Hector used on grand occasions. This suit was the workmanship of one of the best armourers of Milan, and fitted so well to the finely formed limbs of the cavalier, and its joints were so cunningly connected, that it preserved the *contour* of his body without at all diminishing its beauty, at the same time leaving him entirely free and unincumbered in all his movements. Having completed arming himself, and attached his sword to his left side and his dagger to his right, the two friends descended arm in arm, and, followed by their attendants bearing their lances, helmets and shields, and leading their horses, they arrived at St. Dominick's, where after a few minutes all the thirteen champions, Prospero Colonna, and a crowd of other people, were assembled.

The church was of an oblong form, with three aisles divided by columns and narrow pointed arches of the early Gothic style, and towards the great altar two transepts at the sides formed a cross with the body of the edifice. The choir before the altar, according to ancient custom, was made of wood, the stalls for the priests being separated from each other by richly carved ornaments, to which time had given a shining black colour. In the body of the choir was placed a long bench capable of containing thirteen

persons, destined for the use of the Italian champions. The light of day was increasing, but had not become sufficiently clear to penetrate the stained glass in the long and narrow windows: accordingly the whole church remained almost in darkness, and the reddish flame of the few candles on the altar only gleamed and glimmered on the polished corslets of the warriors, leaving the other figures barely visible. Prospero Colonna, likewise armed, took his place a little in advance of the rest, and had at his feet, to kneel on, a cushion of rich crimson velvet, with his device of the column embroidered thereon in silver, brought for his use by two pages, who stood erect a few steps behind him. The mass commenced: Father Mariano performed it; and the hearts of those amongst the audience who were capable of lofty and generous feelings were not perchance entirely unmoved on seeing those bold and valiant young men humbling themselves before the God of armies, their brows furrowed by toils and wounds, to pray that He might grant them the power of wielding their weapons so as to conquer those who dragged the Italian name in the dust. In their attitudes and movements, to which the long use of arms gave, even in devotion, a sort of gallant air, they nevertheless expressed the religious thoughts that were passing through their minds. At the end of the bench on the left side was Fieramosca, erect, motionless, and with his hands crossed over his breast. He happened to be only a few steps from, and in front of, an open door leading into the sacristy; and the men belonging to the church, going backwards and forwards in pursuance of their duties, might perhaps alone

have distracted his attention from his prayers ; but a scene and a dialogue were added, which at that time more than any other were certain to affect his thoughts deeply.

A man clothed in a tattered cloak of rusty black, with abundance of red hair in disorder and an ill-omened visage, stopped in the middle of the sacristy, and turning to a Dominican friar, who filled up with his corpulence the whole of a leathern seat placed between two chests, the only furniture of the place, asked in a hoarse and grating voice, " Which am I to get ready, the one for the poor people, or the one for the great folks ? "

" A pretty question ! " answered the friar, the only parts of his body moving being his lips ; " don't you know that the Signor Gonsalvo pays the expense ? This is not one of those half-starved wretches of Barletta who, to save paying the curate his fee, allow themselves to be carried away like paupers. Of the first class, I have already told you,—of the first class in every respect ; bells, catafalque, and mass chaunted. You seem more stupid than usual this morning."

The other shrugged his shoulders, and going to one side of the sacristy, Fieramosca lost sight of him : he however heard the man unlock a door and open it ; then he distinguished his footsteps retreating, until after a minute or two he could hear them no longer. After a short time the same steps returned, accompanied by the scraping sound of something dragged along the pavement ; and the noise increasing as it drew nearer, the same man at last reappeared, pulling behind him, and leaving in the

middle of the sacristy, a funeral bier, painted black and ornamented with silver, having at its head a crucifix, and at its foot a skull supported by two bones forming the cross of St. Andrew. He threw over it a large coverlet of sable velvet, after having first shaken and dusted it with a cloth. Whilst the sexton was performing this office with that thoughtless and hard-hearted manner so usual with servants of sacristies, a merry thought found its way into his head, and caused the skin that covered his cheek-bones to wrinkle with a smile.

"Then I shall have something to drink *this* time! For a long time past I have had no other work than with mariners and fishermen. Thank God! every now and then we meet with some of these nice—" (here he turned round sharply, as though fearing to be heard, and lowering his voice continued)—"of these nice tit-bits!"

"There is one lot common to all," drawled the friar, cutting off the end of the sentence with a yawn.

"It may be," proceeded the gravedigger, arranging the pall on the bier, and stepping back a pace or two to see if it hung straight, "it may be that my beldame of a wife has foretold all this. Yesternight (listen to this) we were in bed, and were talking of how there was nothing to do, and how my wife's gown and this coat of mine, which we bought during the last plague, were falling to pieces—and you may see if it is not true." So saying, he turned up the sleeves of his cloak and proved the correctness of his assertion. "And in short, we said that if things went on in this way much longer we should be starved to death. Well, in the morning, just before *Ave-*

maria, while I was getting up to go into the church, 'Heigh ho, Rosso!' said she, 'I have had a dream. I tell thee I have had a dream. I dreamt I was in the kitchen at Veleno's hostelry, and it was crammed full of beds, and the host himself looking as yellow—yellower than them all. In short, the plague was come back, and I dreamt we had made our fortunes, and you were riding about Barletta all dressed like a great cavalier.' In short, tell me, Father Biagio, what are we to do when there is neither war nor pestilence? But it may be before evening—" (here again he lowered his voice, and not perceiving that he was noticed by any one in the church, he pointed with his thumb over his shoulder towards the thirteen young champions)—"it may be, I say, that some one of those may return home tonight upon four feet."

The friar, either from inattention or a wish to uphold the dignity of the priesthood, did not take the trouble of replying; the dialogue, therefore, was put an end to. The sexton, when he had made everything ready, disappeared, and the bier remained in the middle of the sacristy. It never entered Fieramosca's head for whom it was destined. Had the slightest suspicion of it flashed through his mind, it would have deprived him of his reason: nevertheless he found it impossible to withdraw his eyes from it during the remainder of the mass. His thoughts naturally dwelt upon the idea that that day might possibly be the last of his life, and he turned more fervently his spirit towards God, asking pardon of Him for all his sins. He mentally reviewed the time which had passed since he had taken Ginerra

from the church of St. Cecilia, and it furnished him with no matter for remorse excepting for not having revealed to her the fact that Graiano was living. Of this, however, and of every other sin, he had made full confession the evening before. He now felt himself more tranquil, and ready to encounter death boldly. The mass concluded, the thirteen left the church, and following Prospero Colonna, went to his house, where a table was well furnished for them, in order that they might not engage in combat fasting.

Amongst other terms of the compact agreed upon between the French and Italian champions, one was, that if any cavalier should be made prisoner, instead of following his conqueror he should be allowed to ransom himself, his horse and arms, by paying down the sum of a hundred ducats. Each of the Italians placed the amount of his ransom in the hands of Signor Prospero; and the thirteen hundred ducats having been put into a bag, were packed on one of the mules, which were sent on before towards the field laden with provisions and other things that might be needed on the occasion.

The collation having been dispatched, all went in a body to the citadel, where the Great Captain was waiting to receive them in the ball-room. They took leave of him with few words, and he dismissed them with a cheerful countenance, saying that he should expect them to supper, and should order it to be prepared for twenty-six persons, that in case the French should forget to carry with them money for their ransom, they might not be obliged to go to bed with empty stomachs. They then descended into the court-yard, where they found their horses drawn up

in line and held by their squires. They immediately mounted, and went off in double file, preceded by trumpeters, and accompanied by several friends and comrades and a crowd of gazers.

CHAPTER XIX.

AT an equal distance from Barletta and the French camp, where the flat country begins to rise towards the mountains, there extends, in the midst of some hillocks, a level plain about three hundred yards square, formed probably by some ancient alluvium. The earth, consisting of small gravel and siliceous sand, cemented and hardened by time, is quite clear of shrubs and plants, and offers to a horse's hoof a free and secure tread. This was the place selected for the combat. By the diligence of several men sent the previous day for that purpose by both parties, all inequalities in the soil had been carefully levelled; the boundaries of the lists were marked out by a furrow and by large stones placed round its circumference; and under the shade of some immense holme-oaks growing on the brow of one of the hillocks which commanded a complete view of the whole arena, seats were erected for the judges, which were placed beneath a sort of pavilion, consisting of striped red and white drapery, disposed amongst the branches of the trees. In front of this tribunal were fixed in a row, so as to be seen by every one, the lances and shields of the champions of both nations, with their names written in large letters on a tablet.

Curiosity had collected from the neighbouring towns and villages a great crowd of peasants and country gentlemen, who had already, before sunrise, taken their stations on the surrounding heights. Those amongst them holding any sort of rank seated themselves in company with the old people and the ladies on the grass; whilst the rest, such as the boys, the poor folks, and vagabonds of all descriptions, clambered up the trees, and showing themselves here and there amongst the leaves, the colour of their faces and costumes formed a strong contrast with the green foliage around them.

A beautiful spectacle it was, when standing at the inner extremity of the field, turning the back on the inland towns and looking towards the coast, to behold this rich and rural scene rendered gay by such a multitude, all full of life and motion. On the right, those lofty holme-oaks raising their majestic heads high towards the heavens, the dark colour of their leaves setting off the brighter and more lively green of the smaller shrubs. On a plain beyond these, the town of Quadrato, of which the gate alone could be perceived, defended by a tower perched on some rocks, at whose feet the road might be seen winding along. In the centre the champagne country, and beyond it the shore of the Adriatic, the town and castle of Barletta, with the coloured forms of the buildings standing out in strong relief against the blue sea. Further still, the bridge and island of St. Ursula, the lofty summits of Mount Gargano and the line of the horizon; then to the left, the little hills rising gradually higher and higher; and directly opposite the place destined for the judges, on a broken and diversified

soil, clothed with verdure, clumps of magnificent oaks, their trunks covered with ivy, and in the full vigour derived from the richest soil.

The mist formed during the night, breaking up before the morning breeze, floated in the upper regions of the air in clouds of fantastic shapes, which were already tinged by and reflected the gilded rays of the sun. Other streaks of denser mist still remained, lightly poised as it were above the plains, resembling beds of snow-white cotton, out of which peeped here and there groups of high trees or the crests of some hillock. The sun's disc, on the point of issuing from the bosom of the waters, sent its orange light upwards into the sky, leaving all terrestrial objects in shade, save where illuminated by reflection from the upper atmosphere. All the spectators involuntarily directed their gaze towards the point at which it would appear. At last, on the furthest line of the sea, a small spark of vivid flame seemed suddenly to rise into existence; it grew larger, it took a form, and then rose the majestic orb like a globe of fire, and diffused its blazing light, giving shape and colour to all objects, and showing itself reflected on the waving mirror of the ocean.

A troop of foot-soldiers who had arrived there in good time kept the arena clear of the populace who stood dispersed in groups all around, assembling in greatest number in those places where several vendors of eatables and wine had pitched their tents and erected tables and benches. Amongst these was Veleno, the host of the Sun, a personage well known to the reader. In one of the most conspicuous situations, and under some green boughs, he had fixed

his temporary tavern, around which had already crowded a number of soldiers, his usual customers. Two or three frying-pans were on the fire, which was contained in as many portable iron stoves; a table composed of rough planks, fastened as well as circumstances allowed to several stakes fixed in the ground instead of legs, was covered with baskets full of fish, artichokes and vegetables for frying. Veleno, with clean white apron and cap, and his shirt-sleeves tucked up as high as his shoulders, holding under his arm a dredging-box of flour, in one hand a plate of fish and vegetables ready for frying, and in the other a utensil for turning over its contents, set to work to prepare the dish so admired in the South of Italy, without ceasing for a moment to chatter, laugh, ask questions and answer them all at the same time, except when he occasionally interrupted these dialogues by singing the song of '*La bella Franceschina*,' or shouting out at the top of his lungs, "Oh, what anchovies! what anchovies! and these little mullets all alive! Either you have no eyes or no money!" and other edifying information, which might be heard half a mile off.

At length an increased murmur arising amongst those of the crowd who were most elevated, made all faces turn in that direction, and the news passed from mouth to mouth that the French champions had appeared in sight. A few minutes afterwards they turned a corner of the road that wound round from behind the hills, and advancing into the field ranged themselves in order of battle at the upper end of the arena, turning their front towards the sea. The warriors, and about a hundred and fifty comrades and

friends with them, then dismounted, leaving horses to the care of their attendants, and went and dispersed themselves under the oaks near the pavilion, in order to await the arrival of the Italians. A cloud of dust on the Barletta road, midst of which could be distinguished the glint of arms, showed that they would not have to long. The crowd, until then scattered around, immediately pressed towards the barriers of the all eager to push forward, in spite of the gun-foot-soldiers, who, with those kind manners rally adopted by the soldiery of all ages on occasions, beating on the ground, and sometimes the people's toes, with the butt-ends of their pikes, drove back the wave which threatened to overwhelm them.

The Italians came upon the ground, halted on site to their adversaries, stationed themselves in military order, and dismounting, also ascended the oaks covered with oaks. After courteous and mutual salutations, Signors Prospero and Bayard, the two marshals, conversed together, and decided that it was first of all necessary to choose the judges by drawing lots.

The reader, we doubt not, will marvel at finding the famous Bayard amongst the combatants on this important occasion, and at seeing him in the office of Marshal. We can only say on this matter that we were equally astonished; nor can we conjecture any reason for this strange arrangement except the supposition that some wound, not yet healed, might have prevented his using arms, or perhaps the quartan ague, from which he suffered.

about that period, might have weakened him too much: at all events we know that he certainly was not one of the champions.

The names of some principal officers, in equal number, from the Spanish, French and Italian armies, were then written on slips of paper; the latter were folded up and shaken together in a helmet, and the lot fell upon Fabrizio Colonna, Aubigny, and Diego Garcia di Paredes, who immediately seated themselves in the places prepared for them, laid the Book of Evangelists open on a table before them, and received the oaths of the twenty-six warriors, by which they bound themselves not to make use of fraud in the combat, and asserted that they had not sorcery either in their bodies or arms, and would, in the ensuing encounter, avail themselves only of bravery and their own natural strength. The compact was then read aloud, by which it was agreed that each man might ransom himself, his steed and armour, for the sum of one hundred ducats; and one of the Italians emptying the contents of the bag of money which had been brought with them, counted it over and gave it into the keeping of the judges. They expected the French to do the same; and seeing that none of them moved, Prospero Colonna addressed them as civilly as he was able, saying, "And your ransom-money, gentlemen, where is it?"

La Motte stepped forward, and replied with a smile, "Signor Prospero, you will see that what is there already will be quite sufficient."

The Roman baron flushed with anger at this ill-timed jest, but restrained his feelings and merely remarked, "You must kill a bear before you can sell

his skin. But it matters not; and although it was part of the agreement that the ransom should be brought here, nevertheless we will not allow this to be an obstacle to the commencement of the battle. "Gentlemen," added he, turning to his countrymen, "you have heard that this knight considers the question of ransom already settled; it is for you to convince him of his error!" It would be superfluous to mention how this contemptuous behaviour made the Italians' blood boil, but no one replied either to La Motte or to Signor Prospero, excepting by a grim smile or a fulminating glance.

These preliminaries settled, both parties were dismissed by the judges, and half an hour given them to get themselves in readiness; after which a trumpeter, stationed on horseback under the shade of the oaks and near the judges, was to give three blasts as the signal for assault. Returning to their steeds, and seating themselves in their saddles, each troop was drawn up by its Marshal in a line, with the space of about four paces between every man; and both Prospero Colonna and Bayard again examined carefully the curbs, saddle-girths, and the straps and buckles of the armour; and if there were any practised eyes in the two camps, without doubt they were theirs.

Having completed this examination, pulling up his horse in the centre of the line, Signor Prospero said in a loud voice, "Gentlemen, do not imagine that I am going to say another word to excite you to do your *devoir* like your own selves. I see amongst you Lombards, Neapolitans, Romans, Sicilians; but are you not all equally the sons of Italy? Will not the honour of the victory be equally shared

by you all? Are you not in front of foreigners who accuse Italians of cowardice? One thing only I would tell you: look there,—see that wretched traitor Grajano D'Asti. He fights to heap infamy on the head of his own countrymen! you understand me; let him not leave this field alive."

Fieramosca, who was next to Brancaleone, said to him in an under tone, "Ah! if my vow had not tied my hands"—! and Brancaleone answered, "Leave it to me; I have made no vows; I know where to plant my blows!" The desire of killing Grajano had its origin in his mind on the day when, having heard of the many vicissitudes of his friend, he saw that by this means half of the obstacle which separated him from Ginevra would be removed. Finding Grajano afterwards amongst the French champions, he knew that he should have his opportunity; and our reader will remember the information Brancaleone obtained from him on the day of the tournament, whilst the knight of Asti was arming himself near the amphitheatre. Now the unforeseen death of Ginevra put an end to his first notion; he did not, however, abandon his design, and his wish to execute it was increased by the words of Signor Prospero, whom, as the head of the Colonna party, he obeyed implicitly in everything.

Meanwhile the two Marshals had retired to their posts: Bayard near the judges, and Colonna beneath the oak trees. The latter, completely armed excepting his head, mounted on a large jet-black horse, which was covered with a saddlecloth of bright red cloth, embroidered with gold, turned a serious but bold countenance towards his compatriots, awaiting silently

the signal of the trumpet. One of his pages was beside him, dressed in a suit of blue, with carmine-coloured hose, and several subaltern officers of his army in different attitudes, who, in spite of standing motionless, had an indescribably stalwart and martial appearance. As the expected moment drew near, all talking ceased, or at most a suppressed whisper of a monosyllable might be distinguished between near neighbours; and amidst this stillness, which gave a serious and solemn character to the assembly, no noise was heard, excepting occasionally the pawing and shrill neigh of the horses, which, having been kept from much work and well fed, could not endure standing quietly in rank, but champed their gilt bits and covered them with foam, curved their necks and tails, and reared a little on their hind legs, snorted through their extended and blood-red nostrils, and almost seemed to throw out sparks from their eyes.

It is difficult in our days to form an idea of the warlike aspect of a man-at-arms of that time entirely cased in iron, both himself and his horse. Every knight with visor closed, and encased in armour, with his shield at his breast and his lance resting on his thigh, crossed a saddle, the iron bows of which stood up before and behind so as to form supports from which it was almost impossible to fall. Fixed to his seat in this manner, by clinging with his knees he stuck so closely to his horse, that the movements of both seemed to communicate with each other with a sympathy as complete as that which united the two natures of the centaur. Their steeds had the front and sides of the head protected by plates of iron, in which were two holes for the eyes; and from the

middle of the forehead projected a pointed piece of iron. The neck, shoulders, and haunches were all covered with iron plates loosely laid one over another like scales, so as to allow freedom for the animal's movements : a harness of the same material extended over its flanks and crupper, leaving only a place exposed to admit the spurs. The beautiful proportions of these noble creatures were so disguised by all this armour, that they appeared from their legs upwards like so many rhinoceroses. Seeing them standing still, one would have believed it impossible for them to move, much less to run ; but a slight shake of the bridle, or a touch of the knight's heel, found them as active and nimble as if they had been naked, so skilfully was their harness constructed.

Besides lance, sword, and poniard, which every man-at-arms bore about his person, he had suspended from his saddle-bow a steel mace and a battle-axe, and the Italians were rather famous for their use of these last weapons. The manner of adorning themselves was various, according to individual caprice : on the crest of the helmets waved plumes of different colours, disposed for the most part round a tuft formed of the feathers from the peacock's tail. Some, instead of plumes, had strips of pinked stuff or tissue, called by the French *lambrequins*. One wore a surtout or mantle over his armour, another a scarf, or, if he had a very rich and curiously wrought suit, he kept it entirely uncovered : the horses also had feathers or other ornaments on their heads ; and their bridles and trappings of the width of a hand's breadth, festooned, and of colours calculated to strike the eye, from their workmanship and the rich-

ness of their materials, were alone of considerable value. Besides the device commonly painted on the shields, the Italians had mottoes inscribed suitable to the present occasion: for example, the one borne by Fieramosca was, "*Quid possit pateat saltem nunc Italia virtus.*"

At length a herald stepped forward into the midst of the arena, and proclaimed with a loud voice that no one should dare to favour or discourage either party, by actions, words, or signs. Having returned to his place near the judges, the trumpeter gave the first blast of the trumpet: he gave the second; one might have heard the buzz of a fly: the third,—and all the knights simultaneously slackened the rein, bent over their steeds, dug in their spurs, and darted off, first by leaps, then in a furious gallop, against their respective antagonists, raising a shout on the one side of "*Viva Italia!*" and on the other of "*Vive la France!*" which was heard as far as the sea. They had a space of about a hundred and fifty yards to pass over before they met. The dust rose by degrees, increased, became more dense, enveloped them before they closed, covered and entirely concealed them like a cloud when the shock came; and the cavaliers, urging their steeds front to front, broke their lances on their adversaries' shields and breast-plates, with a din like that produced by a broken mass of rock which, rolling over a precipice without any obstacle at first, afterwards meets with a wood, into which it is hurled, and splits, tears, and crashes everything that opposes its course. The sight of the first encounter was therefore hidden from the spectators, and they could barely distinguish the con-

fused heap as composed of men and horses, were it not for the flashing of the arms under the sun's rays, and the pieces of feather, torn by the fury of the first blows, which flew and whirled about in the eddy, and were afterwards carried away by the breeze. The crash resounded through the neighbouring valleys: Diego Garcia struck his fist on his thigh with admiration and fury at not being himself in the midst of it; this was the only movement observable amid the crowd of astounded and motionless spectators.

The battle-group still remained close together for some seconds, and a more subtle lightning flashing out of the cloud of dust showed that the cavaliers had drawn their swords: there was heard a rattling of steel, a clashing of weapons, as perpetual as if there had been twenty anvils at work in the lists. The whole mass filled with light, glittering, and, one might almost say, revolving within itself, was like the firework called the wheel, when partially concealed by smoke, so complicated and rapid was the motion, the contraction, expansion, the winding about in all directions.

The anxious desire to be able to see something and to ascertain which party had come off with most honour in the first encounter was such, that the spectators were on the verge of breaking out into exclamations, and already a rising murmur was heard, when it was stopped, partly by the commands of the heralds, and partly by the sight of a horse running loose without a rider from out of the *melée*, so covered with dust, that not even the colour of its housings could be distinguished. Cantering through the field, it

was dragging the rein half torn and entangled amongst its feet, and stamping upon it now with one hoof and now with another, it gave such tugs to the curb that it brought down its head and ran great risk of stumbling; a large wound behind the shoulder poured forth a stream of blood, marking its track as the animal proceeded; it did not, however, go many paces before it fell on its knees, faint from loss of blood, and rolled over on the ground. It was found to belong to the French party.

The men-at-arms meanwhile closed in couples, and sword to sword gave and warded off the most tremendous blows, and as they wheeled round and hovered about one another in order to gain, if possible, some advantage, the scene of combat, contracted on the first assault, now became gradually extended, and the dust, being carried off by the breeze, no longer concealed the combatants from view: the dismounted cavalier proved to be Martellin de Lambris. Fanfulla, to the Frenchman's misfortune, had been opposite to him in the ranks, and with that mad fury of his, to which, nevertheless, great valour and consummate skill were added, pinned his lance in the other's visor with such effect that he thrust him off his steed and made him feel the hardness of the ground at his full length: in performing this gallant feat, he raised his voice so as to be heard above the tumult, and cried out, "There goes one!" Then seeing La Motte at no great distance, who had lost a stirrup in his encounter with Fieramosca, he went on shouting, "The ransom money will not be sufficient; there's too little money!"—and the fray having spread out a little, he said to the vanquished

knight, "You are my prisoner." But the other, raising himself up, replied with a sword-thrust that grazed the shining corslet of the cavalier of Lodi: before a second passed, Fanfulla's two-handed sword had fallen on the helmet of his adversary, who, made giddy by the first blow, could with difficulty stand on his feet, and Fanfulla laid on another and another, crying out each time, "There's too little money—too little—too little!" the effort required to effect each blow making him pronounce the words with that sort of *appoggiatura* which we hear come from the lungs of a woodman when his axe descends on the trunk of a tree. Martellin, in spite of his endeavours, was unable to recover from this storming; he fell half stunned to the earth, but would not on that account speak of surrendering: accordingly, Fanfulla getting into a rage, gave him a final stroke, which caught him just as he was raising himself on one knee, and laid him motionless at his length on the sand, saying, "Are you contented now?"

Bayard perceiving that his countrymen stood a chance of being uselessly killed, sent a king-at-arms to him, who threw down his baton between the two warriors, exclaiming in a loud voice, "*Martellin de Lambris, prisonnier!*" Some attendants then ran to assist him to rise, and supporting him brought him up to Signor Prospero.

"Blessings on your hands!" said Colonna to the victorious knight; and he gave orders to two of his soldiers to guard the French baron, who would not allow his helmet to be taken off, but threw himself down under the shade of an oak, and there remained silent and immoveable. Fanfulla wheeled his horse

round, and put him into a half gallop to return to the fray. He looked about him to see where his assistance was most wanted, and went along through the arena, twirling his sword, for sport, round and round in *moulinets*, in which exercise he had the most skilful and practised hand in the whole army. Taking a bird's-eye view of the battle, he could see that fortune was not favouring his enemies a whit, and that the Italian cavaliers were doing their *devoir* right gallantly. He immediately began shouting out louder than ever, calling La Motte by name, and returned to the burthen of his song, "There's too little money!" adapting these words to a tune then sung about the streets by the blind beggars. The careless and wild manner in which he sat his horse as he went along,—that sword-play of his, so wonderful though practised in joke, and the tone of his voice,—in short, his *tout ensemble* gave such a whimsical character to his song, that even the serious physiognomy of Signor Prospero was compelled to relax into a smile.

During this first achievement, Hector Fieramosca in running his lance had made La Motte lose his stirrup, but had not succeeded in unhorsing him. In fact he was of a different stamp, both in valour and strength, from Fanfulla's prisoner. Fieramosca, jealous of the honour borne off by his comrade, began working away with his sword in such a manner that the contemner of the Italians could, with all his boasted valour, hardly stand against him. The insults uttered by him on the evening of the supper, when he had said that a French man-at-arms would not deign to employ an Italian even as a stable-boy,

returned to Fieramosca's recollection ; and whilst he showered his thrusts and cuts, loosening the rivets and breaking the armour of his enemy and occasionally wounding him, he said to him with a scornful sneer, " We at least know how to handle the curry-comb ! Defend yourself ! defend yourself ! for deeds and not words will now avail you."

La Motte could not support this scorn, and directed a blow at the speaker's head with such fury, that Hector, having no time to oppose his shield, tried to ward it off with his sword ; but it did not stand the trial, and flew to pieces, whilst that of the Frenchman, descending on the collar of his corslet, cut clean through it, and wounded him slightly above the shoulder-bone. Fieramosca waited not for a second blow, but threw himself on his antagonist and clutched him with an iron grasp, endeavouring to hurl him to the ground : the other abandoned his sword, letting it hang from his wrist, whilst he struggled to extricate himself. This was exactly what Fieramosca wanted : unloosing his hold suddenly before La Motte could again take up his sword, and giving his horse the spur and making him jump on one side, he gained time to detach his axe from his saddle-bow, and with it renewed his attack on his adversary. Fieramosca's fine steed, well trained for every kind of warfare, having been warned by a slight check of the bridle and feel of the spur, raised itself on its hind legs like a ram preparing to butt, and proceeded to take several flying leaps, without once swerving too far from the enemy for his master to reach him. Seeing him act with such intelligence, Hector said to himself, ' I have done well to bring

thee here today!' and bore himself so gallantly with his axe, that he soon regained his lost advantage over the Frenchman.

The combat between these two antagonists, who might be said to be the best men of their respective parties, if it should not decide the event of the battle, would be in a manner decisive of its honour. It would be a double disgrace to La Motte to be conquered,—he who had manifested such contempt for his enemies,—and double glory to Fieramosca to conquer him. His comrades, knowing that he was equal to the undertaking, determined not to take part in it: the French too withheld their assistance from their champion, that it might not be said that after his boasting he had been unable to stand up for himself against one of his enemies. Accordingly, as if involuntarily, they all suspended their combats for several minutes, fixing their eyes on the two young warriors. The thoughts which we have hinted at produced in them the utmost eagerness to conquer, and they fought with such fury, coupled with wariness against committing errors, and alacrity to profit by the slightest advantages, that their contest might be considered a model of the chivalric art.

Diego Garcia di Paredes, who had passed nearly his whole life in feats of arms, was struck with wonder and admiration at the sight of this masterly combat, and was far too restless and impatient to keep his seat quietly: he first stood up, and then went to the very edge of the bank overlooking the arena, and gazed eagerly at it. Seen from a distance, with that gigantic body planted on a pair of Herculean legs, and with his arms hanging down by his side, he

seemed motionless as a statue ; but to those near him, the contraction of his muscles under the tight leather dress that he wore, the clenching of his fists, and above all the flashes from his eyes, proved how his blood boiled within him, and how uneasy he was at being merely a spectator.

The considerations which induced the others to avoid interfering with this single combat either did not enter Fanfulla's mind, or were disregarded by him ; and after leaving Signor Prospero, and scouring the field in the fantastic manner before described, he urged on his horse, and with uplifted sword rushed towards La Motte. Hector perceived this, and cried out to him, "Keep back !" but this not availing, he rode across the other's course, and gave him a back-handed blow of the axe on his breast, which in rather a rough manner made him pull up his steed. "Surely I am enough for this man, and too much !" said Fieramosca in a tone of vexation.

This act, so courteous towards La Motte, was applauded by all except Fanfulla, who bursting out into one of those Italian exclamations impossible to explain, added, half in anger and half in jest, "Put your tongue into your hands !" He then turned his horse and galloped like a madman in amongst his enemies, and, without directing his attack particularly against any one, put them all into confusion ; and the suspension of the combat having thus been ended, the battle was renewed more hotly than ever.

Brancaleone, firm in his purpose from its commencement, had run the lance with Grajano D'Asti, and their fortune in the first encounter had been equal. Having drawn their swords, the contest was

kept up between them without any decided advantage on either side. Brancaleone was perhaps superior to his enemy in strength and even in skill, generally speaking; but the Piedmontese was one of the best fencers of his time; and any one who understands the use of the sword, knows how useful this accomplishment is.

Amongst the remaining couples of combatants the victory was still quite undecided; and although the battle had not lasted more than about an hour and a half, yet it had been so warmly and obstinately contested that it was easy to perceive that both men and horses required a short breathing time, which was granted them by common accord of the judges. A murmur like that which we hear instantaneously rising in our theatres on the fall of the curtain after a scene which has captivated the attention of the spectators, suddenly arose throughout the crowds surrounding the arena. The knights, returning to their original stations in two ranks, dismounted; one might be seen taking off his helmet to cool his forehead and wipe off the perspiration; another, finding the harness or trappings of his charger broken in any part, endeavoured to mend it. The horses, shaking their heads and opening their jaws, sought relief from the pain caused by the checking of their curbs; and no longer feeling their riders in the saddle, put down their heads and gave themselves a long shake, making their armour ring again. The portable-tavern keepers all around, finding their lungs again at liberty, renewed their cries louder than ever; and the two Marshals putting their steeds in motion rode up to see the state of their respective parties.

It was the opinion of every one that the Italians hitherto had the best of the combat, one of the French cavaliers having been taken prisoner, and the others being evidently roughly handled and nearly all wounded; and amongst the many who had laid wagers on the event, those who had backed the latter began to contract their brows and look uneasy. The brave Bayard was too experienced in these matters not to perceive that things assumed a bad appearance for his comrades. Nevertheless he studied to conceal this impression, encouraged them, placed them in line, and reminded each one of particular rules in military art, and of the best offensive blows, and most advantageous modes of defence.

Prospero Colonna seeing that his men had least need of rest, from having been less illtreated than their enemies, after half an hour had passed, demanded that the combat should be renewed. The judges accordingly ordered the signal to be given. The steeds, though their still palpitating flanks gave evidence of exhaustion, as soon as excited by the spur, again erected their heads, and again bore their masters gallantly into the strife. The victory must now necessarily be decided in a few minutes: the silence and stillness of the spectators, and the rage and fury of the combatants increased. The *gala* vesture, the plumes and the ornaments, had either flown off in pieces or were soiled with dust and gore. From Fieramosca's side the two ends of his blue scarf dangled down, having been cut in two by a sword; his helmet was bare and deprived of its crest; but he himself, slightly wounded only in the shoulder, felt stout and fresh again, and pressed hard upon La Motte, with whom he had again engaged. Fanfulla

had attacked Jacques de Guignes. Brancaleone continued his contest with Grajano, endeavouring in all ways to strike him on the helmet; and his other comrades, scattered here and there through the field, were fighting hand to hand in couples against the French, most of them using their axes, and wielding them with admirable skill.

All at once a loud exclamation arose from amongst the spectators; and the combatants also turning to ascertain the cause of it, saw that the strife between Brancaleone and Grajano was over. The latter, bending over his horse's neck, his helmet and skull completely laid open, was losing blood by pailfulls; it flowed through the holes in his visor, over his armour, and down the legs of his steed, which made blood-red marks on the sand as it stamped with its hoofs. He at length fell headlong on the ground, and his fall resounded on the earth like that of a sackfull of old iron. Brancaleone raised his axe still reeking, and brandished it above his head, crying out with his manly and terrible voice, "*Viva Italia!* and may this be the end of all renegade traitors!" Then fiercer than ever he wielded his weapon with both hands and rushed against his enemies, who still kept up their defence. But the contest could not be of long continuance. The fall of Grajano, it would seem, gave the turn to the balance. Fieramosca, enraged at the long and obstinate defence of La Motte, redoubled both the force and rapidity of his blows, so as to disconcert and bewilder his antagonist, who, already deprived of his shield, with only half his sword remaining in his hand, and his harness all loosened and broken, received on his neck such a thundering stroke from Hector's axe, that it

made him bow down even to his saddle-bow half stunned and for the time almost deprived of sight. Before he could recover himself, Fieramosca, who was on his right, twisting round his shield behind his back, with the left hand seized hold of the braces on La Motte's shoulder that supported the breastplate of the latter, and clinging tightly with his knees clapped spurs to his horse; and Airone leaping suddenly forward, the French knight was thus dragged forcibly from his saddle. He was no sooner stretched at his length on the ground than Fieramosca, without losing a moment, threw himself off his horse, and standing over his enemy with naked poniard, pointed it so closely to his eye as almost to touch his forehead, and cried out to him, "Surrender, or thou art dead!" The baron, still only half himself, made no answer; and this silence might have cost him his life, had not Bayard saved it by proclaiming him a prisoner.

La Motte having been borne out of the field by his squires, who delivered him to Signor Prospero, Fieramosca turned round to remount: his steed had vanished; he looked round amongst the combatants, and perceived that Giraud de Forses, whose horse had been killed under him, had purloined Airone and joined his own ranks in making head against the Italians. The brave Fieramosca was rather puzzled when he thought of the improbability of recovering his horse, alone and on foot as he was. But he had fed and trained it up with his own hands, and taught it to follow his voice: he was not, therefore, long in doubt as to his proceedings. Approaching as near as he could to the animal, he began calling to it, stamping his feet as he was accustomed to do when

going to give it corn. The noble animal immediately moved towards the well-known signal, which its rider wishing to oppose, it at first began rearing and plunging, and then, without its new master's being able to prevent it or to manage it in the slightest degree, carried him, to his infinite vexation, into the middle of the Italians, who surrounded and made him prisoner without using their weapons. The Frenchman dismounting the horse, on which Fieramosca soon leaped, cursed his misfortune; but the latter, extending by its point the sword which had been taken from the prisoner, said to him, "God be with you, brother! take back your weapon, and return to your comrades, for we make our prisoners by force of arms, and not by conjuror's tricks."

The French cavalier, who expected anything but this, stood still in great amazement. He thought a moment, and then replied, "Did I not surrender to your arms, I must to your courtesy;" and taking his sword by the middle of the blade, he proceeded to lay it down before Signor Prospero; and it was acknowledged by all who praised the courteous behaviour of Fieramosca, that the Frenchman also had acted and spoken well and nobly; on which account he alone was afterwards liberated without payment of ransom.

The French troop was deprived of four of their best swordsmen, whilst the Italians still counted their thirteen all mounted, so that it might easily be seen how the affair would terminate. Notwithstanding this, the dismounted Frenchmen, to the number of five, placed themselves in close rank, and posted on their flanks their four comrades who were still on

horseback ; and in this manner prepared themselves against the approaching attack of the Italians, who, closing for the third time, intended to charge their adversaries in a body.

It never entered into the mind of any one that the latter could withstand this assault ; but, admiring nevertheless the constancy and skill of those brave men, the anxious curiosity of the spectators to see the issue of this last manœuvre became stronger and stronger, and some even felt a degree of dissatisfaction that so much valour had to contend with such desperate risk of life in a strife so unequal. But the French feared not on this account : bruised, wounded, covered with dust and blood, they presented a cruel but honourable spectacle, awaiting firmly and boldly the awful danger of so many horses coming upon them and threatening to trample them on the earth. At length the Italian squadron was put in motion, but not with their former rapidity, for the weariness of their steeds prevented it, many of them, from the constant and violent tugging at their curbs, having their mouths covered with bloody froth. The cavaliers shouted more loudly than ever "*Viva Italia!*" but, in spite of their perpetual spurring, their steeds advanced to the charge in a heavy, clumsy gallop. Notwithstanding the strict regulations of the combat, proclaimed at its commencement, such was the mania of curiosity that seized the spectators in this moment, that the circle formed by them round the lists kept gradually contracting. The soldiers employed to preserve order were even the most curious of all, and they likewise followed this concentric motion ; the whole resembling the scene at a bull-bait, where at

first every one stands firm in his place, but when one dog has fastened on one ear of the animal, and another dog on the other, and they have almost succeeded in pinning him down to the ground, no one has patience to stand still any longer; the shouts and cries multiply and grow louder; all order is broken through, and each man pushes forward as far as he can to obtain the nearest possible view of the catastrophe.

In the middle of the newly-ranged line of the Italians was posted Fieramosca, who had the best horse; and on each side, by gradation, those whose steeds were least weary or had the best paces; so that in charging their enemies the centre projected, the band forming a wedge, of which Hector was the point. This order was so well maintained, that when they came to blows the French rank was broken through without the possibility of its forming again. Then began a combat closer and more terrible than ever. Against the numbers, valour and skill of the Italians, were opposed almost superhuman force, desperation and rage at the imminent, the inevitable defeat. The brave and unfortunate French, amid a whirlwind of dust, fell wounded and bloody beneath the horses' hoofs; they got up again, seizing at the stirrups and bridles of their conquerors; they fell back again, knocked down, roughly treated, trampled upon, rolling over and over, half disarmed, their armour broken in pieces, yet still striving to recover themselves, and picking up from the ground broken swords, bits of lances, and even stones, to use in their last efforts to delay their total discomfiture.

Hector was the first to cry out to them to abandon the combat and surrender themselves prisoners;

but he was scarcely heard through the din ; or, if they heard him, they gave their refusal by their deeds, suffering in silence those fearful shocks, and, intoxicated by fury, continuing their wonderful defence. Of the four who were in their saddles at the onset of this last encounter, one had fallen and was defending himself on foot ; two had their horses killed under them ; and the fourth, taken in the midst of his enemies, was made prisoner. It would be impossible to describe the extraordinary incidents, the blows, the desperate deeds which took place during those last moments, and of which the spectators for years after retained a recollection of mingled wonder and horror. De Liaye, to mention one example, was seen to grasp with both hands the curb of the Roman Capoccio's charger, in order to pull him down if possible, or deprive him of the bridle : the animal knocked him down and trampled him with its hoofs, but nothing could make the Frenchman leave his hold ; so that, dragged along the field, he was brought in this condition before Signor Prospero, and it required the aid of several hands, so completely was he out of his senses, to make him unloose his grasp and place himself amongst the other prisoners. At last it seemed to the Italians themselves too cruel to follow up such a battle as this ; the cry of Fieramosca was repeated by others, and at length all, suspending their blows, continued exclaiming to their few remaining adversaries, " Surrender yourselves prisoners—prisoners ! "

A murmur arose amongst the populace ; it grew louder and more general, and in spite of attempts from the heralds to repress them, cries, shouts and

yells broke forth, demanding the conclusion of the fight, and that the lives of the French should be spared. The barriers were broken through, and the crowd thronged around the combatants, who now found themselves inclosed in a circle of about thirty or forty yards in diameter. One man shouted, another waved his handkerchief, others their hats, as if hoping thus to separate the combatants, while others addressed themselves to the marshals and judges. Signor Prospero making his way through the crowd, and approaching the combatants, raised both his voice and his baton to induce the French to yield. Bayard also, much as he was grieved at the unfortunate issue of the battle, seeing that any longer struggle would be useless, and considering that it would be a sin to spill the blood and destroy the lives of those gallant men, came forwards and entreated his countrymen to surrender themselves prisoners; but his voice was listened to no more than the others by the conquered cavaliers, who, barely retaining the outward semblance of men, seemed rather so many furies or demons let loose. The judges at last descended from their tribunal: they advanced into the middle of the circle: they caused the trumpets to sound, and the proclamation to be made in a loud voice, that the Italians were victorious. The latter then wished to retire, but it was useless; their enemies, whom rage, grief, and the pain of their wounds had maddened to a degree that they were unable any longer to hear or understand anything, pursued them like tigers involved in the coils of a serpent, endeavouring to close with their adversaries in any manner they were able.

Diego Garcia, at length, seeing that there was no

other mode of settling the matter, took his determination, and threw himself on the shoulders of Sacet de Jacet, who was hanging on to Brancaleone, and struggling to pull his axe out of his hands, whilst the latter was hesitating whether or not to deal him a blow on the head, which certainly would have killed him: Diego seized him in his iron embrace, and dragged him, in spite of all opposition, out of the fray. This example was followed by several of the spectators, who in a moment rushed upon the combatants; and in spite of the many blows and knocks they received, yet by pushing, and tearing, and pulling, they succeeded in the end in carrying off from the midst the five or six half-killed men; and though the latter still struggled and foamed with rage, they were at last borne away under the oaks with the other prisoners.

The combat was barely concluded when the first care of Fieramosca was to fling himself from his horse and run to Grajano D'Asti, who still lay motionless on the very spot where he had fallen. When Brancaleone inflicted the fatal blow, Hector's generous heart could not entirely help feeling a momentary throb of joy: but it was no sooner felt than repressed by a noble and virtuous thought. He pushed aside the people who were crowding round him, made his way past them, and knelt down by his side. The blood still flowed from the wide wound, but slowly and curdling: he raised his head softly, carefully, nay tenderly, as though he were thinking to save the life of a dear friend, and succeeded in removing the helmet; but the axe had cleaved the skull, and entered three inches deep into the brain.

The knight was dead. Hector, with a sigh that proceeded from the depths of his heart, laid the head of the deceased again on the ground, and standing up addressed himself to his companions, who had also come to look on, and more directly to Brancalone. "That weapon of thine" (pointing to the axe which Brancalone held in his hand still reeking with blood) "has this day fulfilled a great and just decree. But how can we indulge in rejoicings at such a victory? The blood now soaking this earth, is it not the blood of an Italian? and that brave man, so valiant in battle, might he not have shed it to his own and his country's glory, against our common enemies? The tomb of Graiano would then have been respected and renowned, and his memory have been an honourable example. But instead of this, there he lies in infamy, and on his ashes will fall the curse against traitors to their country!"

After these words all returned to their horses in silence, and immersed in deep thought. The corpse was the same evening removed to Barletta; but, on attempting to bury it in consecrated ground, an outcry was raised against it by the people, who would not suffer it. The gravediggers bore it about two miles out of the town to a dried-up course of a torrent, where they dug a pit and buried the body. From that time ever after the place was called the 'Traitor's Pass.'

Signor Prospero, before moving to leave the field, turned to Bayard, and asked whether he wished to pay the ransom for his comrades. La Motte's bragging was thus paid off upon Bayard, who made no answer. The judges then decreed that the prisoners must ac-

company their conquerors to Barletta. They proceeded towards the town on foot, silent and almost stupefied, surrounded by an immense mob, and the Italians followed them on horseback amid the sound of martial instruments, and acclamations of "*Viva Italia! Viva Colonna!*" On arriving at the citadel the Italians ascended into the presence-chamber, and presented the twelve prisoners to Gonsalvo, who awaited them attended by his noble suite. The Great Commander, having first bestowed much praise on the victors, turned to the French cavaliers, and said, "I trust I shall ever be incapable of adding insult to the misfortunes of brave men. The fortune of arms is fickle, the creature of a day; and he who is vanquished today may be the conqueror tomorrow. I need not tell you to give due respect henceforward to Italian valour: after this day's deeds my words would be superfluous. I may be allowed, however, to say, that you may from this time learn to honour gallantry and bravery wherever they may be found; and to remind you that God has distributed them amongst men, and has not granted them as a special privilege to your nation alone; and that true courage is adorned by modesty, but disgraced by vain boasting."

Having dismissed them at the conclusion of this address, they all left his presence together, and so ended that glorious day.

CONCLUSION.

ALL those who relate or write a tale, (we are quite sincere,) have within themselves a degree of hope that it may possibly delight some one who may be found to listen to or read it to the end. We too have kept this hope snugly in a little corner of our heart, —a hope which, like the flame of a candle exposed to the wind, at times has waxed larger, (the reader may laugh at us, perhaps with reason,) and at others has diminished, and sometimes been almost on the point of going out. Nevertheless our *amour propre* has managed so well, that it has never, up to this moment, been entirely extinguished. If this little flatterer has not deceived us; if we have, in truth, met with a reader sufficiently patient to have accompanied us thus far, we may be allowed to flatter ourselves that he will be glad to hear something more of Fieramosca; and we most willingly proceed to tell him all that we have been able to discover further concerning him.

When Gonsalvo had dismissed the victorious knights and their prisoners, the latter were received and handsomely treated in the house of the Brothers Colonna, where they slept that night. The next morning, their ransom-money having been brought from the French camp, they were liberated, and accompanied by numbers, even beyond the gates of the town, with those demonstrations of respect due to their valiant defence.

But Fieramosca had barely left the presence of the Great Commander, when he gave no further

thought to them. His thoughts were at length able to revert to himself and Ginevra, and he quietly withdrew from the midst of his comrades, who were walking about surrounded by groups of friends, and who intoxicated with joy at their glorious victory could think of nothing else at that time, and did not regard his movements. He saw, at the end of one of the terraces above the court-yard, Vittoria Colonna, who, after being present at Gonsalvo's reception of the thirteen warriors, was returning to her apartments, and was on the point of entering them; but he ran along and called to her by name, which caused her to turn round and stop. Vittoria, who had been partly made acquainted with the circumstances of Fieramosca's life, was at no loss to guess the reason of his calling her. 'O Heaven! what answer can I give him?' thought she to herself; but there was no time to reflect, for Hector was already by her side. His armour was covered with dust, and hacked and hewed in several places by the blows it had received; on his helmet there was still one broken, drooping plume, of the others nought being left but the stumps of the feathers; his visor being raised, displayed his handsome countenance, its features sharpened by fatigue and overspread with perspiration, at the same time filled with joy at the glory he had obtained, and with anxiety to find her whom, since the death of Grajano, he could at length consider his own. As the heart of man is inclined to hope or fear according to the peculiar circumstances around him at the time, the depression, I may say despair, which he had felt on the night and morning previous to the combat, when thinking of Ginevra, now, after re-

ceiving a sort of physical and moral shock from the long-continued contest which ended in pouring the ineffable satisfaction into his mind of being victorious, had changed into a confident hope of finding her safe and well.

"Lady!" said he with that quick breathing produced by strong palpitation of the heart, "may God reward and bless you! I know everything—how you received her, what kindness you showed her, what good you did her.—Poor thing! she indeed required it. Lead me to her:—let us go, for the love of Heaven!"

Every word of the young man was like a dagger-blow to Vittoria's heart; for she could not gather up courage to announce the melancholy news to him: she had, however, sufficient fortitude to compose her countenance into a half smile, and said to him, "Ginevra is again at St. Ursula."

This was too true; for about an hour before the return of the Italians from the field, she had been carried to the Convent, accompanied by Father Mariano, in order to be interred at night.

"At St. Ursula!—how! so soon? Then she has not been very ill? then she must be well?"

"Yes, she is well."

Fieramosca opened wide his arms (so full of gladness was he) as if to embrace Vittoria, but instead of that, sinking on one knee and seizing her hand, he impressed on it kisses of gratitude, which were more expressive than a thousand words. He then started up as if he had lost his reason, and was running off in the direction of St. Ursula: but all at once he stopped, on glancing at his breast, and turned back

again. "See, lady!" said he, smiling, and with a slight, bashful trepidation, "see this blue scarf—she gave it to me: today a sword-blow aimed at my corslet, struck it, and cut the scarf in two." While saying this, he undid a knot which he had made of the two ends, to prevent its falling off.

"I am aware it is rather bold of me to ask such a favour, but if it would not be too much trouble, would you oblige me by joining it, that Ginevra may not see that it has been cut? She might take it, poor thing, as a bad omen; she might say, 'Could you not have protected it with your shield?'"

Vittoria went willingly to her chamber to procure what was necessary for this purpose, happy of such an opportunity for leaving the young man a moment in order to hide the emotion she felt at seeing him encouraging such fallacious hopes. She returned rather more calm and collected, and employed herself in mending the scarf, holding down her head the while. Fieramosca could perceive nothing. Whilst the lady was at her work, he said laughingly, "One can hardly tell now what colour it is: it has seen many and great vicissitudes; it has been the companion of my misfortunes, it shall now witness my happiness. You know not for how many years it has never left my side! I have saved it in so many battles; and today, when all my wretchedness is changed to joy, they have well nigh deprived me of it! What would any one say to this who believes in omens?"

Vittoria continued sewing indefatigably, without answering a word. Struggling between the idea that she ought to let him know the truth, and her invincible repugnance at occasioning him so much grief,

she thought to reconcile herself to this deceptive silence, by the determination of seeking out Brancalone as soon as Hector should be gone, and warning him to follow and comfort his friend in this terrible trial.

"A thousand thanks to you!" said Hector when the work was completed, and away he went, rushed down the steps, and in a moment was in the courtyard. No one was left there but Masuccio, who was holding the bridle of his steed, all covered with foam: the poor animal held his head low and his eyes were dull and glazed, a heavy panting heaved its flanks up and down. "To the stable! to the stable!" cried Hector to his squire, in passing; "who taught you this? a sweating steed standing still in the open air!" and he went out of the court directing his steps to the harbour, in order to go to St. Ursula the shortest way, by water.

On arriving at the slip where the boats were usually kept, not one was to be seen. The ships laden with fresh troops from Spain had come into harbour and cast anchor, and Gonsalvo, anxious for the soldiers to be disembarked before night, had taken up all the craft in this service. Hector stamped on the ground with impatience, and exclaimed aloud, "I must go on horseback: it is certainly the longest way, but it cannot be helped." He went back to the stables: Masuccio was just about to take off Airone's bridle. "Leave it on," said Fieramosca; and taking it in his own hands, he threw it over the animal's neck, leaped into his saddle, and in a few minutes was outside of the town, and on the road leading along the shore to the Convent.

"Poor Airone!" said he, patting his horse's neck, whilst with his heel he hastened the unwilling trot of the good steed, which found it hard to be forbidden his stall after such fatigue; "you are in the right,—but have patience with me a little longer, and then you shall have plenty of rest and refreshment."

In the mean time night was fast approaching: the sun had set half an hour. Fieramosca, whose course was towards the east, had behind him a clear and serene sky, but before him he saw it covered with long heavy black clouds, their bases forming a line parallel with the horizon. From this were seen several showers of rain, more or less dense, descending on the line of the sea: the summits of these cloudy masses, still reached by the twilight, had a whitish tint. In the darker part of the mass there was a constant tremulous flashing of the lightning, and he heard the deep and distant rolling of thunder. The sea was becoming rougher, and threatened a storm; far out, the high-swelling and gloomy waves, almost black, had their crests only tinged with minute and snow-white spray, but near the shore they rose gradually, becoming thinner and thinner, green and transparent, and advancing like a wall of glass, until the upper edge curled over, and they fell with a crash, and inundated the dry gravel on the beach with their foam.

The gloomy appearance of the weather did not at that hour in the least disturb the happiness of the young Italian. He measured with hasty and impatient glance the space of road which separated him from St. Ursula, and the shore being smooth and open, he could take the whole in his eye at once. He began

imagining to himself the pleasure of the first sight of Ginevra ; in his mind's eye he beheld her coming to meet him, with that frank but modest glance, that easy and graceful step peculiar to herself. He hoped to be the first to give her intelligence of the victory, and his only anxiety was in devising the best mode of acquainting her that now she had the power of disposing of her hand.

When he was about the distance of two musket-shots from the tower, the east wind, blowing hard in his face, had borne the storm much closer : large heavy drops of rain struck across his breast-plate and splashed off from the steel ; they came down faster, and by degrees smaller, but more numerous. Then succeeded a clap of thunder which seemed to let loose a cataract from the heavens, and down fell a flood of water that drenched Fieramosca from head to foot, though it reached him when but a few paces from the tower. The gate was still open ; he passed through it rapidly, and was soon on the island and at the Strangers' Cottage. Fastening his horse to an iron railing under cover, a few leaps brought him into Ginevra's apartments. We need hardly say, that he found them deserted. He descended again, and at once thought of seeking her in the church. He knew that she was accustomed to offer up her devotions in a little oratory high up in the building : on entering the church he looked up there ; it was empty : the place seemed deserted, and was almost in darkness : that part of the choir which first met his eye was empty too, yet he thought he heard the deep sound of chaunting, apparently proceeding from underground. He walked hastily forwards,

and perceived that from the aperture before the great altar, which looked down into the crypt below, a ray issued, casting upon the roof of the church the form of a circle of pale light; when he came nearer he distinguished voices reciting prayers in the subterranean chapel. Going round behind the altar he descended the steps. The rattling of his armour, and the clank of his spurs, and of his sword-point beating against the steps, made those who were within turn round: they formed a circle round the chapel: the circle opened; at his feet he found that same bier which he had seen in the morning in the sacristy of St. Dominick; opposite to him, beside the altar, was Father Mariano in his *rochet* and funeral stole, uplifting in his hand the aspersory. In the midst was an open tomb: on one side, two men holding up the stone which was to cover it; and on the other, Zoraide kneeling, bending over the corpse of Ginevra which was already within it, and with tears and sobs arranging the veil around the pallid face and a garland of white roses on its brow.

Hector was at the foot of the steps. He saw everything. He stood motionless, without uttering a sound, without making a sign, without moving an eyelid: his countenance by degrees became contracted and pale as death, his lips trembled convulsively, and large drops of cold sweat rolled down his forehead.

Zoraide's sobbing was redoubled, and Father Mariano with faltering voice, that proved how his bosom was torn by the sight of the miserable youth, could only say, "Yesterday her soul flew to heaven! God's presence makes her happier now than she would

have been with us here below !” But even the good priest’s words were interrupted by weeping, and he was silent. The stone, let down by iron levers over the hollow of the tomb, fitted into its place, fell, and was firm and fast.

Hector was still motionless. Father Mariano approached him, and took his hand which resisted not, embraced him and turned him in order to lead him out of that place, and Hector obeyed. They ascended the steps and left the church : the lightning, thunder, and a deluge of rain still continued. When they came near the Strangers’ Cottage, Fieramosca gently disengaged himself from the priest’s arm, and before the latter had time to speak a word, was already in his saddle, bending over his horse’s neck and plunging his spurs into its flank, and the tramp of his steed resounded from beneath the great gate of the tower.

Neither Fieramosca’s friends nor any man of that age saw him ever after, either alive or dead. Many conjectures were made as to his end, but all doubtful and unsatisfactory. One alone presented an appearance of probability : it was the following.

Some poor mountaineers of Gargano, employed in making charcoal, related to some other rustics, (and so from mouth to mouth the report arrived in Barletta, some time after the Spanish camp had been raised,) that there had appeared to them a strange vision one night during a tremendous storm, of a knight armed and mounted on the summit of some rocks deemed inaccessible, which overlooked a precipice descending perpendicularly into the sea : this was first rumoured amongst a few persons, then

spoken of by many, and at last it was held by all to be true, and that the personage was no less than the archangel Michael. When, however, it came to Father Mariano's ears, he compared the time and place and was rather inclined to believe that it must have been Hector, who, maddened by grief, had urged his steed into these dangerous places, and had at last fallen with it down some unknown precipice and perhaps into the sea.

In the year 1617, a shelf of rock having been left dry by the sea under Mount Gargano, a fisherman by chance discovered, wedged in between two large blocks of stone, a mass of old iron, almost entirely corroded by the salt water and rust; within it were human bones, and the skeleton of a horse was found beside it.

The reader may now adopt that opinion which he thinks best, for our tale is done.

To believe that it will meet with a favourable reception on account of its own merits, would be a vain and ridiculous self-flattery; but we think we may be allowed to hope that Italians will receive with kind indulgence the good intention of one who records for their benefit an historical fact which does them so much honour. In order to make the valour of the conquerors more conspicuous and resplendent, we have not allowed ourselves to introduce certain circumstances of aggravation against the conquered; the more so, because they may be discovered to be false, by reading the histories of Giovio, Guicciardini, and other writers, who mention this combat. It formed no part of our plan to do injustice to French bravery, which we should be the first to acknowledge

and applaud; but only to make known the valour which the Italians displayed; and we have no occasion to alter history for that purpose, since it has rendered us full justice. While on this subject, it may be permitted us to remark, that we esteem most pitiful and wicked that spirit of contest, often aided by falsehood, which excites men of different nations mutually to reproach each other with their disgraces and their crimes: but that, on the contrary, it may be deemed a worthy office for him who wishes well to the human race, according to that law of love and righteousness proclaimed by the Gospel, to trample under foot those murderous sparks of discord and hatred.

But what shall we say of those enmities still more sacrilegious and senseless, which have lasted so long and been so frequently revived between different factions of the same nation? Alas! Italy cannot in this deny her preeminence of guilt and shame, whilst in other points no one can refuse to acknowledge her supremacy in merit and renown: and although those enmities have been and are now more than ever deplored and cursed, it will still be long before the blame equals the measure of the crime. It appears to us, therefore, that he who anew brings into notice any of those grievous actions which abound but too much in our history, may fulfill, though imperfectly, an important office, but should not be charged with its being a useless one. It seems to us, moreover, that this judgement of disapproval must appear more sincere and be more efficacious, when a man suspends it over that part of Italy where he was born: for otherwise, the judgement might perchance seem partial, and not wholly separated from that misera-

ble *municipal* envy upon which it is intended more particularly to heap disgrace. We therefore thought that to a native of Piedmont it belonged more than to any other, to bestow on the memory of Grajano d'Asti, the censure which his deeds justly merited. The illustrious Count Napione has already expressed the opinion of the Piedmontese with respect to that man, writing of him thus, "Our countryman of Asti, who in the famous combat of Quadrato, having taken up arms against the Italian nation and on the side of the French, not only divided with them the disgrace of being conquered by the Italians, but remaining dead on the field, was then adjudged by every one to have borne the punishment of his folly, in having chosen to combat for a foreign nation against the honour of his own country*."

Let us be permitted to add our conviction, that at the present day not a single imitator of this vile wretch, if sought for amongst us, would be found.

* Napione, *Dell' Uso e dei Pregi della Lingua Italiana*, lib. i. cap. 4.

THE END.



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